



**President  
Auburn Seminary  
New York, NY**

## **THE SEARCH**

Auburn Seminary (“Auburn”) seeks an inspirational and courageous faith-rooted and justice-driven leader with an extraordinary track record of taking an organization to the next level to serve as its president. Founded as a Presbyterian Seminary in 1818 in upstate New York, Auburn has always embodied a spirit of openness and innovation that transcends boundaries, challenges norms, and shapes necessary conversations in the public square. Auburn’s founding mission was to train ministers “hardy” enough for the frontier; educating them to preach a warm-hearted gospel and to engage in the critical issues of the day—from poverty to women’s rights to slavery—including serving as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Today, as a national organization housed in New York City’s Morningside Heights neighborhood, Auburn is poised to launch the next bold chapter on its journey, externally and internally, in a world that calls us to address white supremacy, authoritarianism, division, and climate change.

Auburn is a trusted field-building catalyst and catalyzing partner, building with others a multiracial, multifaith democracy in which all belong and thrive. Auburn is also a renowned multifaith leadership development and research organization whose mission is to identify and strengthen leaders from the pulpit to the public square, build community, bridge divides, pursue justice, and heal the world. Auburn views faith, religion, and spirit as essential resources for a new world in which differences are celebrated, abundance is shared, people are hopeful, and all can work for a future that, as Langston Hughes wrote, “never has been yet—and yet must be.” Auburn’s current tagline, *Trouble the Waters, Heal the World*, represents its commitment to liberation theologies and just action, and inspires the Auburn community to stir up norms to create needed change.

As a valuable, growing node in the progressive spirit- and justice-rooted ecosystem, Auburn connects, weaves, and cross-pollinates networks. Auburn offers leaders of faith and moral courage access to rich learning environments, ranging from peer networks and cohort programs, to trainings and convenings, as well as applied research, communications, and consulting services that develop leadership capacity, effectiveness, and resiliency. Whether these leaders work at the grassroots or grasstops levels, in congregations, or within organizing movements, each of these individuals are working with others towards a more just, equitable society. Auburn’s programs and operations are supported with an annual operating budget of \$6.5 million (FY 2020-2021). The current endowment is approximately \$20 million, and the Board recently launched an Innovation Fund to support the next president’s initiatives along with the team’s ongoing creativity.

Auburn's next president will partner with a deeply engaged board of 25 accomplished leaders of faith and moral courage from diverse industries, religious communities, and ethnic groups; along with a passionate and skilled staff team of 21; and an impressive network of program partners and supporters. Together, this collective will build on Auburn's decade-long landscape-shifting initiatives and will amplify narratives of faith, justice, and moral courage through a robust multifaith lens. This leader will also champion Auburn's own internal organizational culture as the institution continues to practice and embody its commitment to the core values of equity, inclusion, justice, and care. The ideal candidate will be a leader among leaders—accomplished, inspiring, justice-rooted, and faith-informed—with a demonstrated ability to cultivate existing and new high-impact strategic partnerships, steward mutually enriching leader-to-leader relationships, and generate the resources necessary to sustain and expand Auburn's impact well into the future. This leader will also continue to refine, focus, and implement Auburn's mission and vision for maximum impact—while simultaneously investing in Auburn's people, infrastructure, and organizational culture.

Auburn has retained Isaacson, Miller (IM) to assist with this important executive search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm in confidence as indicated at the end of this document. For more information, please visit the organization's website at: [www.auburnseminary.org](http://www.auburnseminary.org).

## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Auburn has deep and complex historical roots. The Seminary has been committed to honoring and building on the positive aspects of its historic identity, while also acknowledging and striving to repair many of the harmful impacts of that same history. Ultimately, embedded in the DNA of Auburn is the belief that a truer history must be told before one can create a more just future.

In the wake of the Revolutionary War, upstate New York experienced a population boom along with an ancillary religious revival, which was so fiery that the area eventually became known as the "Burned-Over District." Auburn Seminary was founded in Auburn, New York, by local Presbyterians who wanted to "home grow" ministers "hardy enough for the frontier" and able to preach a warm-hearted gospel to local people. Like the town of Auburn itself, the Seminary was built on land that belonged to the Iroquois people and its building foundation was also excavated by the unpaid labor of prisoners from the neighboring state prison. Approximately 2,600 men and a handful of women would graduate from the Seminary before Auburn relocated to New York City in 1939. In its early years, Auburn was guided by an assumption that Christian values should shape the emerging American nation, so it sent its graduates to missionize across the U.S. and world.

As Auburn alumni evangelized to people around the globe, students at home were being encouraged to participate in the anti-slavery movement alongside people enslaved in antebellum America. In 1831, Auburn students formed one of the earliest anti-slavery societies in New York state and publicized their views in the abolitionist newspaper, *Friend of Man*. Three years later, the entire campus received Reverend Samuel Cox, who had been driven out of New York City for preaching that Jesus himself may have been "dark-skinned." Cox taught at Auburn from 1834-1837, the same years that upstate New York abolitionist Gerrit Smith served as an Auburn trustee.

While no official statement denouncing slavery emerged from the Auburn administration during that time period, Auburn students and faculty engaged in acts of spiritual resistance through the 19th Century. When

Harriet Tubman moved into the town of Auburn after leading seventy people from slavery to freedom, Professor Samuel M. Hopkins, who taught church history, befriended her and introduced Tubman to his sister, the author Sarah Hopkins Bradford, who interviewed her and published *Harriet, the Moses of Her People*. In another instance, Professor Ezra A. Huntington opened up his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad, and sheltered freedom seekers in an empty seminary building during the summer months when students were on break. Despite this history of abolitionist activity at Auburn, Auburn did not graduate its first African American student, Rev. Moses Hopkins, until 1877. Rev. Hopkins, born into slavery in Virginia, later founded the Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church and Albion Academy in Franklinton, North Carolina, before being appointed as U.S. Minister (Ambassador) to Liberia by President Grover Cleveland in 1885.

### **Auburn's Spirit of Freedom**

Though founded by Presbyterians, Auburn has never been a strictly sectarian seminary. The first entering class in 1821 included 11 students from eight different denominations, and during Auburn's first centennial celebration in 1918, Auburn President George Black Stewart acknowledged the "men who were not known as churchmen" among Auburn's founders; affirming that the School had never and would never betray their trust by resorting to "a narrow ecclesiasticism, a selfish denominationalism, or an intolerant spirit." Auburn honors this founding tradition through its multifaith work of today.

Auburn has also played a prominent role in defending theological freedom within Christianity throughout its history. In fact, Auburn faculty joined movements that prevented a fundamentalist takeover of the Presbyterian Church in the 19th and 20th Centuries by crafting documents known as the Auburn Declaration (1837) and the Auburn Affirmation (1924), which addressed accusations of heresy and also challenged efforts to test the orthodoxy of candidates seeking ordination in the Presbyterian Church.

This same progressive ethos also led the Seminary to refresh its offerings by opening a Summer School of Theology (1911), a Summer School for Christian Workers (1913), and a School of Religious Education (1921) for lay people, the first of its kind in the U.S. At the time, Auburn President Harry Lathrop Reed (1926-1936) explained his decision to expand educational opportunities for laity, including and especially for women, as a way of keeping Auburn "in step with this generation." While Presbyterians did not ordain their first woman until 1956, Ida Thorne Parker, a Quaker minister and professor of Bible, became Auburn's first female seminary graduate in 1917.

### **A Pentchant for Reinvention**

Throughout its history, Auburn has successfully reimagined and reinvented itself for greater service and impact. After the 1939 Depression, Auburn relocated to the campus of Union Seminary (Union) in New York City. Auburn Hall, built in 1950, enabled Auburn and Union to launch a cooperative partnership that endures even to this day, while also retaining separate identities.: Auburn focusing on continuing education, and Union cultivating students for ministry.

With over two hundred years of accumulated knowledge and history, Auburn has been highly successful in navigating uncharted waters, taking risks, and pivoting to respond to the most critical issues of the day. Over generations, Auburn's staff and board have built on a legacy of audacity that has allowed the organization to take giant leaps of faith and free itself from traditional notions of religious leadership, theological education,

and institutional norms. At the same time, Auburn respects its deep ties to the theological values of its founding Presbyterian denomination, and maintains a covenant agreement with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that honors its origins, its capacity to evolve, and its current work. Today, Auburn's contemporary identity as a multifaith research and leadership development institution that supports leaders of faith and moral courage, along with deep commitments to social justice, reflects the expansiveness of the Seminary's history, as well as its dynamism as a living institution that continues to evolve in response to society's changing needs and expectations.

## **AUBURN TODAY**

In 2009, Auburn's Board elected Rev. Dr. Katharine Rhodes Henderson to serve as Auburn's 10<sup>th</sup> president. Katharine succeeded Barbara G. Wheeler, Auburn's president from 1980-2009. Collectively, Wheeler and Henderson presided over Auburn during deeply transformative periods in the American religious and theological landscape and the broader national and global social, cultural, and civic context. During Wheeler's tenure, Auburn expanded from a missional entity that provided professional and continuing education for Christian clergy and lay leaders, to an educational organization addressing the growing realities of religious pluralism. Wheeler further established a Center for the Study of Theological Education that analyzed, informed, and supported the changing needs of leaders, congregations, and the accredited theological schools of North America. Upon retiring as president, Wheeler continued this highly influential work as Director of the Center.

Beginning in 2009, Henderson has established Auburn as a dynamic, innovative, national organization committed to "healing and repairing the world" through networking, educating, and supporting spirit-rooted leaders working on the front lines of justice. Auburn has operationalized this bold vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by focusing most of the organization's efforts and resources on emerging expressions of faith-rooted justice leadership and social movements in public life. Under Henderson's leadership, Auburn has also invested in structural and cultural work that is necessary to ensure that Auburn successfully embodies the robust intersectional diversity that fuels justice-centered work.

### **Auburn's Home in the "God Box"**

In 2018, Auburn again moved its physical home, this time from Union's campus to a purpose-built, 11,000 sq. ft. space at the Interchurch Center, known colloquially as "The God Box," at 475 Riverside Drive in New York City's Morningside Heights neighborhood. Adjacent institutions include Columbia University, Riverside Church, and nearby seminaries such as Jewish Theological, New York Theological, and Union Theological—as well as other national and global religious and civic institutions. While the geographic move signaled Auburn's commitment to its expanded mission, Auburn continues to offer scholarships, academic advising, professional mentoring, experiential education, and classes on Presbyterian polity and worship for students at Union.

In addition to Auburn's space housing staff offices and hosting programs and convenings, the building offers dynamic and flexible seminar and meeting rooms specifically designed to foster spiritual inspiration, creative innovation, and high-impact collaboration among the expansive network of partners, fellows, and collaborators. This residence is also a mission-related investment for Auburn, generating revenue from

groups and peer organizations that are drawn to its intentional design, attractiveness, and unique capabilities.

### **Institutional Growth and a Focus on Organizational Culture and Equity**

Over the past decade, Auburn has grown significantly in terms of budget, staff size, programmatic portfolio, partnerships, and impact. As its footprint has grown and its mission has evolved, so too has Auburn's need to attend to how it designs and manages robust organizational structures, systems, and policies, as well as cultural norms and values that enable productivity, accountability, trust, respect, mutuality, care, belonging, and growth for all staff.

To this end, in 2019, Auburn began evaluating its own internal organizational culture. Auburn entered an 18-month contract with [Race & Resilience](#), a consulting firm that works with organizations to create a culture of equity that drives performance and builds resilience. This comprehensive culture change work includes employee engagement, leadership mentorship and coaching, and the development of policies and protocols that support and reinforce a culture of equity. Recently established, Auburn's Equity Team comprises staff members from across the organization and works with the consultants to draft the organization's equity plan. The Equity Team will present the equity plan to Auburn's Board in the summer of 2021, for implementation in partnership with Auburn's senior staff leaders and the Board.

### **AUBURN PROGRAM PORTFOLIO**

In 2019, Auburn also went through a strategic engagement process which included an intensive program review, along with budget planning for the future. The outcome of this process resulted in the streamlining of Auburn's twenty-three programs to thirteen and aligning these initiatives into three strategic program categories: Leadership Development; Community Interventions and Movement Building; and Social Impact and Narrative Change.

Today, each of these thirteen programs rests on the convictions that spirit-rooted justice leaders are fundamental to successful and sustainable social transformation; that the sharing—of wisdom, skills, relationships, and resources—can be a radical act; that nourishing the ecosystem of leaders of faith and moral courage sustains Auburn too; and that moving change more effectively requires centering and empowering under-resourced communities as well as enabling and disseminating research-informed narratives and models that advance a vision of justice and flourishing for all.

With Auburn staff support, leaders, organizations, and mass movements across the country can sharpen their sense of the challenges and opportunities confronting them, can engage resources and unlikely partners to advance their work, and collaborate on envisioning the next creative, strategic steps towards a world in which all belong and can thrive. Auburn's clients and participants include faith-based NGOs, theological schools and seminaries, congregations, movement collectives and justice organizers, filmmakers and creatives, and civil sector organizations.

This list below, along with signature events and initiatives managed by the Strategic Philanthropy team, reflects Auburn's current program portfolio:

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### [Auburn Senior Fellows](#)

The Auburn Senior Fellows program which began in 2015 is a multifaith leadership development community for preeminent faith-rooted justice leaders in the U.S. who are working toward social and economic justice, and who have the potential to catalyze social movements. These Senior Fellows are leading and modeling multifaith engagement related to the most pressing social challenges today, including race, immigration policy, voting rights, economic inequality, the environment, LGBTQ justice, and criminal justice reform. This program offers its participants leadership and communications coaching, as well as strategic networking, regular peer connection, and opportunities to engage with Auburn's broader programming.

### [Emerging Leaders](#)

Auburn currently supports emerging leaders through a 5-year national leadership development project called, *Preparing Prophetic Leaders for Multifaith Ministry*. This initiative is part of a national funder's Thriving in Ministry program. Participating clergy and other emerging faith leaders are equipped with networks of mentorship peer learning, cross-generational story-telling, and ongoing support to lead effectively in the face of rapidly changing contexts of ministry today.

### [Media and Movement](#)

Since 2014, Auburn has conducted media trainings for individual leaders and groups in an effort to strengthen and amplify justice movements and prepare leaders to engage with mass media. Whether faith leaders are planning to appear on a major news network, respond to a reporter at a justice rally, be interviewed on a podcast, or testify at a local city council meeting, media trainees receive the tools to find their voice, strategize their message, answer the toughest interview questions or build an effective communications strategy.

### [Presbyterian Leadership Program](#)

To maintain Auburn's vibrant covenant relationship with the Presbyterian Church (USA), in 2020, Auburn decided to combine its historic Presbyterian Students Program at Union with the Edwards Fellowship. Nurturing, supporting, and resourcing future Presbyterians in ministry, particularly women, Black, LGBTQ, and millennial leaders, is Auburn's primary programmatic intervention in the Presbyterian community. Through these programs, Auburn creates opportunities for Union students and Edwards Fellows to participate as Theological Advisory Delegates at biannual Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly meetings. Auburn also remains committed to supporting and nurturing future lay and ordained leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by partnering with congregations and councils, social justice entities, and ecumenical communities to include Presbyterian students and leaders in its multifaith leadership development, community intervention, and social impact programming and research.

### [Sojourner Truth Leadership Circle](#)

The Sojourner Truth Leadership Circle was founded in 2013. It is a fellowship program that supports the lives, leadership, and longevity of Black women who work at the intersection of faith and spirituality, community-building, and social justice, and have been essential to democratic development and social change movements throughout U.S. history. This Leadership Circle is rooted in Audre Lorde's ground-breaking idea that caring for ourselves is a revolutionary act and "self-care is a mandate for prophetic leadership." Sojourner Truth Leadership Circle cohorts and public programs are designed to ensure that the ordinary care

of the bodies, minds, and spirits of Black women is a priority in their own lives—and that they can practice that care in community in the social justice spaces where Black women leaders disproportionately serve.

## **COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS AND MOVEMENT BUILDING**

### **Being in Relationship**

Being in Relationship began in 2011 with the release of *My Mind Was Changed*, a research-based messaging guide designed to support moderate Catholics and mainline Protestants reconsidering their approach to LGBTQ people in church and society. Through partnerships with Goodwin Simon Strategic Research, Wonder: Strategies for Good, and the Global Faith and Equality Fund at the Horizons Foundation, Auburn responded to the broader need for new approaches to relationships between progressives and conservatives that centered human dignity. Auburn developed tools for Black and white theologically conservative Christians and LGBTQ Christians committed to nurturing families, churches, and societies where all can participate, and has continued to support regional, national, and online theological forums where people of faith addressing toxic elements in their faith traditions can find community and share strategies with others on the journey. Being in Relationship advocates for curiosity, compassion, and deep engagement across differences over an extended period to ensure long-term cultural change. Being in Relationship has even more intentionally centered conversations on racial justice recently as Christian communities have been rocked by increasingly overt expressions of White nationalism. In addition to the aforementioned founding partners of Being in Relationship, new partnerships have been established with [OurBibleApp](#), an online faith community, and [Women's March's Digital Defenders Program](#), a training resource that connects Being in Relationship's relational tools with strategies for de-escalating and de-polarizing online conversations in an era of misinformation and authoritarianism.

### **Feminist Leaders for Reproductive Justice**

Feminist Leaders for Reproductive Justice emerged in 2019-2020 when, over the span of 15 months, Auburn worked in Arizona, Louisiana, and Wyoming to grow the bench of faith-rooted feminist organizers that would be equipped to advance reproductive justice in their local communities. From that work, Auburn developed a new curricular guide that leaders can use to build and sustain new hubs of advocacy, activism, and community engagement with the ultimate goal of strengthening the reproductive health, rights, and justice movements. This resource, *We Don't Want to Be Stars*, is now available in print and digital formats. Building on Feminist Leaders for Reproductive Justice's first two years of programming and research, Auburn is currently exploring the theological frames operating among mainline congregations and reproductive rights leaders nationwide; working with a Texas coalition to expand a congregational designation program for Christian churches that welcome open conversations about reproductive health, access, and justice; deepening partnerships with national organizations across the field; and applying resources from other Auburn programs such as the Sojourner Truth Leadership Circle to provide under-resourced reproductive justice leaders with the care, respite, and community that can sustain them in their vocation.

### **Hartley Media Impact Initiative**

The Hartley Media Impact Initiative at Auburn launched in 2017 in an effort to extend the strategic influence of the Hartley Film Foundation and the documentary films it sponsored. Today, the Auburn team develops programs that build the field of documentary film impact at the nexus of faith and justice. Since compelling storytelling can strengthen justice movements, this program identifies documentary films that address critical social issues and also equips film protagonists, directors, and producers to build human-centered

public impact campaigns, along with healthy relationships with faith communities. Through these partnerships, Auburn is not only expanding the network of faith communities leveraging powerful stories for the common good but also training and resourcing the first ever cohort of faith-rooted film ambassadors in media.

### **Partners in Movement**

As Auburn has honed its approach to relationship-building and partnership development, the Partners in Movement program has become the organization's hub for identifying, developing, and supporting robust spirit- and faith-rooted local and regional interventions across the U.S. that address critical issues such as economic justice. Since 2020, Auburn has begun gathering leaders in regional and national formations from San Francisco to Arkansas and Tennessee, and has invested in their local networks, sharing innovative resources across hubs and mapping innovations in economic justice nationwide. This work will build on Auburn's deep regional relationships and will strengthen MountainTop 2022 as a leading gathering for those engaged in intersectional, faith-rooted organizing, with a particular focus on challenging damaging narratives about poverty and systems of economic injustice.

### **MountainTop**

MountainTop is a large gathering that convenes 100+ multifaith movement leaders that represent a wide array of backgrounds, traditions, and commitments, in order to lean into the truth of their experiences as a necessary resource for the work to heal and repair the world. Auburn has hosted three MountainTop events: Mountaintop 2013 in Nashville, TN on the multifaith movement for justice; Mountaintop 2015 in Atlanta, GA on racial justice; and MountainTop 2019 in Oakland, CA on movement resilience. Each MountainTop gathering is framed by an overarching theme and several guiding questions that animate the time spent together in conversation and in community.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT AND NARRATIVE CHANGE**

### **AM-Media Training**

AM-Media Training is a cohort-based training program that networks and develops the communication capacities of early-to-mid-level faith and movement organizers from geographically, religiously, and racially diverse communities. During the 2020 election season and the period of national turmoil that preceded it, Auburn created the Friends for Life podcast and Organizing Circle to fortify, strengthen, and amplify public-facing messages among movement leaders, campaign organizers, and faith organizations working on public policy advocacy. Rooted in the practical and theological rich concept of friendship, the Friends for Life podcast has explored how community organizers, artists, philanthropists, and congregational leaders cultivate relationships of love and accountability as part of their work for justice in the world. The conversations and relational wisdom of participating leaders in the Friends for Life podcast and Organizing Circle served as the catalyst for AM-Media Training and have nourished a coalition of over 40 national and regional progressive faith groups adapting to organizing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unusual demands of the 2020 electoral cycle. This coalition, held with the Center for American Progress and other partners, continues to cross-pollinate, build collaborative strategy, and amplify participant organizations' campaigns.

### **Future Story**

The Future Story of America project was initially designed to develop and resource leaders of faith and moral courage in the lead-up to the 2020 election and to empower them to cast a just, generous vision for the



future of the U.S. In the project's first season in 2020, topics included economic injustice and national identity, to the rural-urban divide and perspectives on the Electoral College, and each installment was read by as many as 18,000 readers. Season 2, in development, will continue to challenge polarizing theologies and civic philosophies to move readers toward a multiracial, multifaith democratic horizon. Briefings will also introduce readers of all backgrounds to new ways to engage democracy in their communities.

### Groundswell Movement

Launched in September 2011, Groundswell Movement is a digital-to-offline organizing program that Auburn maintains as a service to the multifaith movement for justice. Auburn hosts a petition, email, and events platform that organizers can use to inspire strategic social action on issues from racial justice and immigration to campaigns on LGBTQ dignity and a just economy. As part of this effort, Auburn staff advise faith leaders and organizers on ways to refine their digital campaign strategy for greater impact across channels and from concept to completion. In just the last seven years, Groundswell Movement has engaged more than 700,000 signers and has hosted over 400 campaigns. In addition, during the 2020 electoral season, the Groundswell Movement supported faith-rooted GOTV messaging and coalition support. Post-election, Auburn has been convening focus groups of Black, Latinx, and White faith-rooted leaders to learn about how they are reading the theological and political opportunities and challenges of this time, what their chief community concerns are, and how they can deepen their understanding within and across demographics.

## **STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVES**

### Lives of Commitment

Auburn's Lives of Commitment is an annual benefit gathering that, since 1996, has honored and celebrated the deep resilience of women leaders who embody moral courage and are dedicated to advancing justice in our time. In 2021, Auburn will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lives of Commitment event.

### The President's Global Forum

The President's Global Forum is a distinguished leadership program developed by Auburn in 2016. Individuals from a wide range of professional backgrounds and spiritual traditions participate in two intimate gatherings annually—one in New York and one in a global destination location that changes each year. These meetings focus on conversations and transformative activities around ethics, beauty, and solutions for creating a more just and compassionate world. Participation in the President's Global Forum is selective since Auburn seeks individuals who closely align with Auburn's mission and who are willing to commit to the ongoing support of Auburn philanthropically and relationally.

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

### **Governance**

Auburn is governed by a 25-member Board of Directors (Board). Board officers include a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer. Each officer, with the exception of the president, is elected by the Board for 1-year renewable terms. The president serves at the pleasure of the Board and is an ex-officio member. Auburn's bylaws require that the Board have 15-25 members, and directors may serve two consecutive three-year terms. At the Board's discretion, members may be elected to serve a third consecutive three-year term before being required to rotate off for at least one year before being elected to another term. Additionally, one-third of the members of Auburn's Board are members of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Board

meets three times a year, with special meetings sometimes taking place. This group of individuals is incredibly diverse, highly-accomplished, very engaged, and brings a valuable array of perspectives and skills—from religion to finance, marketing, medicine, law, and advocacy.

### **Executive Leadership and Staff**

In recent years, Auburn's staff size has ranged from 21-30 full-time employees, which includes senior leadership, finance and administration, programs and research, strategic philanthropy, and communications. At present, the Management Team is comprised of the president, the chief finance and administration officer, and the senior vice president of programs. The president is also supported by an executive assistant. In a previous administrative structure, the day-to-day administrative operations were led by an executive vice president, and the program and research functions were led by a dean of the Seminary. These duties are now shared by the chief finance and administration officer and the senior vice president of programs. The new president will determine the best organizational structure moving forward. Additionally, this leader will make senior-level strategic hires in philanthropy and communications.

### **Finance and Administration**

The chief finance and administration officer at Auburn oversees budgeting, financial management, human resources, technology, and facilities and hospitality. Staff includes the accounts payable accountant; the manager of information technology; the director and manager of facilities and hospitality; and the director of people operations.

### **Programs and Research**

The senior vice president of programs at Auburn oversees programming and the program and research staff, including the vice president of embodied justice leadership; the vice president of partner engagement; the director of the Hartley Media Impact Initiative; the director of applied research; the director of program operations; the assistant to program operations; the counselor to Presbyterian students; and a network of consultants who support training, facilitation, and strategy.

### **Strategic Philanthropy**

The vice president of strategic philanthropy (currently vacant) oversees a director of strategic partnerships; an assistant director of institutional partnerships; a philanthropy associate; and an engagement associate. Auburn is currently undergoing a review of its strategic philanthropy function with an outside consultant. This next president will have an opportunity to help shape the future direction of strategic philanthropy at Auburn, including the recruitment of a senior leader of strategic philanthropy.

### **Communications**

The chief communications officer (currently vacant) oversees an integrated marketing director, as well as a contracted team of marketing and communications consultants. Auburn is also proactively examining its communications needs with outside consultation. In addition to identifying a new vice president for strategic philanthropy, this president will also help set the future direction of Auburn's communications strategy which will include the recruitment of a chief communications officer.

### **Current Financial Picture**

Today, Auburn's operating budget is \$6.5 million (FY 2020-2021). Approximately 33% of Auburn's annual budget is funded by gifts and grants (\$2 million) and 10% from special events and sponsorships, including

Auburn's marquee event, Lives of Commitment. Income from Auburn's endowment, which is approximately \$20 million, provides an additional \$1 million, or 17% of the operating budget. Previously restricted gifts and grants of \$2.7 million make up approximately 40% of the FY21 budget. Additional revenue sources include consulting fees, space rental (currently on hold), and other activities. The organization has also received U.S. government PPP loans during the pandemic.

Looking ahead, Auburn's president will work with the Board and senior leadership team to determine the optimal operating budget and growth plan in alignment with the future direction for the organization.

## **ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT**

The president of Auburn will lead a bold and evolving institution with a rich and long history of developing leaders of faith and moral courage, supporting organizations, and catalyzing movements that strengthen communities, bridge divides, and heal the world through multifaith action. This president will serve as an inspirational leader, a powerful communicator with a public voice, an outstanding people connector, relationship builder, fundraiser, and an internal organizational champion. More specifically, this leader will represent Auburn externally and internally and will be accountable for the financial health and sustainability of the organization, as well as leading discussions around best practices with respect to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

### **Key Opportunities and Challenges**

Within this context, the next president of Auburn will be expected to specifically address the following opportunities and challenges:

#### **Continue to hone Auburn's mission and lead a disciplined approach to the implementation and operationalization of that vision.**

The president of Auburn will serve in the role of a visionary and inspirational leader along with being a strategic and tactical leader that is excited by the prospect of leading the Seminary's internal and external stakeholders to refine and further coalesce the institution's expression of its mission and vision for the future. This will involve a strategic assessment of all the activities that Auburn engages in—from research, to programs, events, partnerships, its physical space, and digital footprint. The president will lead this effort, in partnership with the senior leadership team and the Board, in an effort to sharpen existing programs and approaches where necessary, and, over time, launch new programs and initiatives that respond to the evolving needs of faith and social justice leaders, organizations, and movements in a changing and challenging global context.

#### **Skillfully steward Auburn's public profile and key relationships**

The president of Auburn occupies a unique position of being both a recognized multifaith and social justice leader themselves as well as a supporter, developer, and amplifier of the work and reputation of other faith and social justice leaders, and the organizations and movements they lead. This dual role requires a nuanced and sophisticated approach to leadership that promotes the brand and reputational strengths of Auburn while also being unquestionably a resource for others rather than a competitor. This next president will be a savvy relationship builder and coalition-builder who is highly successful in recruiting, retaining, and aligning

partners, funders, and other leaders in support of Auburn's strategic goals of supporting and empowering the multifaith movement for justice.

**Secure the financial underpinnings of Auburn by sustaining, growing, and diversifying its fiscal resources.**

Auburn has benefited from recent budget planning and financial management measures, to get to revenue-neutral, and ultimately a cash flow positive budget in 1-2 years. Looking ahead, the president will serve as a key rainmaker for Auburn. This leader will be supported by the vice president of strategic philanthropy and a high-performing strategic philanthropy team. Building on the current generosity of donors and funders, the organization will work to continue to grow and diversify revenue streams beyond its base of long-standing donors, including reaching out to new major donors that span an even more diverse range of backgrounds and interests. Additionally, the president will work to ensure growth in institutional donor support exists, along with research and consulting revenue, facility use revenue, event-driven revenue, program fees, grassroots fundraising campaigns, and income generation from sponsorships and partnerships. Moving forward, it will also be important to ensure that Auburn generates a nice mix of restricted and unrestricted gifts.

**Effectively build, support, and nurture a high-performing and diverse internal organization**

The president of Auburn will be an experienced and effective leader with the skills and appetite to support the internal management of the organization, while also building, developing, and retaining a high-performing team that collaborates, communicates, and effectively and efficiently manages Auburn's operational and programmatic portfolios. This leader should be oriented to continuous improvement and metric benchmarking to position the institution for continued success. This leader will work to ensure a shared sense of purpose and to foster a culture of respect for all members of the staff, board, and the Auburn community.

**Lead Auburn through operational re-entry plans as the organization embraces a "new normal" during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the operations, finances, and programmatic realities of all organizations and Auburn is certainly no exception. The full Auburn team has been working remotely for over a year now. Planning is underway for the eventual safe re-entry of staff into Auburn's physical offices as well as the resumption of meetings, program activities, and events hosted in its space. Considerations include the possibility that some members of the staff team may request to continue working remotely. Additional contemplations include Auburn's significant financial and mission investment of its physical space at 475 Riverside Drive, as well as how that space factors into revenue generation projections and long-term program planning. The president, in partnership with the Board and the Management Team, will lead the organization through this re-entry process.

The ideal candidate would bring all or most of the following professional and personal qualities:

- Experience leading and managing an entrepreneurial organization in the faith, multifaith, or social justice space. Ideally, also has experience working at the national level.
- An active and demonstrated personal commitment to a faith tradition/spiritual practice.

- A track record of providing dynamic, visionary, and motivational leadership, while also successfully implementing and delivering on said vision.
- A highly effective communicator with the ability to build strong relationships, collaborations, and engage in bridge-building across a broad range of diverse constituencies. Must also have the ability to cultivate a compelling public profile and engage across different media platforms, along with leading keynote addresses, presentations, convenings, etc.
- Demonstrated fundraising experience, including cultivating individual and institutional major donors, program-focused philanthropic grant funding, and event-driven fundraising.
- Ability to manage a large organization with multiple divisions, including exposure to strategic planning, program development, evaluation and assessment, finance and budgeting, and general management.
- A strong demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and evidence of global competency.
- Proven track record of hiring, managing, and mentoring a diverse staff, along with developing high-performance teams and nurturing a positive and sustainable work culture.
- An empathetic, approachable, collaborative, and accessible leadership style with a high degree of emotional and relational intelligence. A high degree of personal integrity.
- An advanced degree in religion, theology, or a related field is preferred. Degrees and/or significant experience in fields other than religion along with a proven record of commitment to faith-informed leadership and advocacy are also welcomed.

## TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to:

Rebecca M. Swartz, Partner  
Ernest A. Brooks III, Senior Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

**Electronic submission of materials is encouraged via: [www.imsearch.com/7869](http://www.imsearch.com/7869)**

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