Alma College invites expressions of interest for the position of provost and vice president for academic affairs to begin in the summer of 2018. We seek a transformational leader who will collaborate with our outstanding faculty to advance the mission of the college and support innovative learning experiences in a student-centered academic community, while maintaining focus on academic excellence and the liberal arts core of the college.

The provost will report to President Jeff Abernathy, the 13th president of the college, who has served in that position since 2010. The provost is an integral member of the President’s Cabinet and works collaboratively with the president and other vice presidents to provide leadership for strategic priorities and for implementation of established policies. The current provost, Dr. Michael Selmon, will leave the position in June 2018 after serving successfully in that role for 15 years.

About Alma College

Alma College is a private, independent four-year liberal arts college located in the city of Alma in the geographic center of Michigan’s lower peninsula. The college is situated on 125 acres and owns a 200-acre ecological research station.

Alma was founded in 1886 by the Presbyterian Synod of Michigan and is governed by an independent Board of Trustees. Its Phi Beta Kappa chapter is one of only eight in the State of Michigan.

Enrollment averages 1,450 undergraduate students, typically drawn from approximately 30 states and eight foreign countries. The average high school GPA of entering students is 3.5. Nearly all of Alma’s students are traditional college age and live in campus housing.

The college currently awards five degrees — Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The faculty have designed over 50 programs of study, including the addition of 16 new majors since 2010. The next provost will play a lead role in facilitating the addition of new programs.
A Tradition of Academic Excellence

An Alma education seeks to instill a love of learning and celebrate the joy of discovery. Each Alma student experiences a deeply interdisciplinary education that provides opportunity for self-reflection, hands-on learning, and personal and professional development. It will embrace the principle of local, national, and global learning communities, build upon strong mentoring relationships and integrate rapidly changing technology essential for current and future career paths.

The college is committed to providing programs and activities for students to

- study across a broad intellectual spectrum;
- cultivate lifelong intellectual, spiritual and vocational discovery;
- promote in-depth study in an intellectual area;
- focus on the human values that undergird the worth of individuals and the welfare of society; and
- appreciate the wholeness of knowledge and the value judgments that are basic to wise decision-making.

Alma College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and will seek re-accreditation in 2019-20 under the Open Pathways model. A self-study committee will prepare for accreditation under the direction of the vice president for planning who will work collaboratively with the new provost in this assessment. Specific programs of the college are also accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, the American Chemical Society, and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.

Recent national recognition for the college includes

- Princeton Review’s Colleges That Create Futures: 50 Schools That Launch Careers by Going Beyond the Classroom
- Princeton Review’s Best in the Midwest listing (14th year)
- Fiske Guide to Colleges listing of the 300 “best and most interesting schools in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain” (32nd year)
- Colleges of Distinction (11th year)
The Opportunity for a New Provost

The college seeks a leader who will not only support faculty in advancing current initiatives but also facilitate further innovation in the college’s academic offerings, work to build coherence in the college’s general education program, and clarify expectations for faculty work.

The new provost joins the college at a time when faculty are engaged in exciting and creative solutions to the challenges facing a residential liberal arts college, especially with regard to recruitment and retention. Some of the recent initiatives include:

**Foundations of Excellence.** In FY2017, the college completed the second year of a comprehensive two-year self-study and improvement process utilizing the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education’s Foundations of Excellence model. The focus of the project was to identify opportunities and implement change that would improve first-year retention and overall persistence. Some of the positive outcomes include the curriculum development efforts discussed below; the establishment of a dedicated assessment committee bringing new emphasis on knowing and sharing campus data; working with community governance groups to generate a common understanding of goals in teaching and advising students; implementing enhanced support for high-risk students; and implementing new communication processes to better identify individuals at risk of attrition. Partly in response to the findings of this self-study, in FY2018 the college will implement the Starfish Retention Solutions software to further enhance efforts to identify and intervene with at-risk students.

**Mellon Foundation Initiative.** In FY2016, Alma was awarded a $100,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to explore curricular innovations leading to effective learning. A faculty-elected steering committee conducted workshops to identify student learning outcomes essential for our graduates. The steering committee then invited proposals for curricular innovations that could serve as models for curricular change across the college. Eight teams representing 28 faculty submitted proposals and six of the eight were funded by the grant. Thirteen classes, linked into four separate learning communities, are offered in fall 2017. All are open to first-year students and three of the four are restricted to that group. Plans explore multiple curricular models, including one course at a time, cohort-based learning communities and living/learning communities.

**Support for Classroom Innovation.** Twenty faculty are participating in a year-long course development framework provided by the John N. Gardner Teaching and Learning Academy with funding from the Alma College Anderson Center for Teaching and Learning. During the summer of 2017, each faculty member revised a course that targets first-year students and will teach the class in its modified format in fall 2017. Upon completion of the class, the faculty will assess the impact of their changes and make further adjustments.

**Strategic Investment Review.** A Strategic Allocations Task Force led by Provost Michael Selmon completed a comprehensive assessment in FY2017 to identify up to $1,000,000 of funds that could be reallocated to support key initiatives of the college’s strategic plan. During the fall 2017 term, phase two of this initiative began with the formation of the Strategic Investment Review Team, co-chaired by Provost Selmon and Chief Operating Officer Alan Gatlin. This team will invite campus suggestions for new or expanded academic offerings for the identified funds. The team will review the submissions and submit up to six for further study by January 2018. The new provost will play a lead role in moving the selected proposals forward.
Organization of the Academic Sector

The Board of Trustees has delegated responsibility for the curriculum to the president, provost and the faculty. Under the leadership and guidance of the provost, the faculty has primary responsibility for determining the academic programs, educational policy, academic standards and instructional procedures.

Alma College employs approximately 100 full-time teaching faculty of which 82% hold the Ph.D. or other terminal degree. The student-faculty ratio at Alma is 12:1 and the average class size is 18. The faculty are organized into three divisions—humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

The Provost’s Office full-time staff includes the provost, associate provost, assistant provost, administrative specialist/records coordinator, and administrative assistant. Additional staffing is provided by a three-year rotating associate provost position for faculty who wish to gain administrative experience. The faculty member in this role serves half-time in the Provost’s Office, while maintaining a half-time faculty course load. Additional direct-reports to the provost include the registrar, the associate vice president/director of the Center for Student Opportunity, the director of libraries, and the technical director for the Remick Heritage Center for the Performing Arts.
Strategic Planning

In 2016, the college revised its strategic plan, entitled Vision 2020, with three clearly stated priorities:

**Priority 1: Student Learning.** Alma College provides challenging developmental learning experiences that enable students to graduate with the knowledge and skills that support their personal and professional goals. We will develop campus-wide programs and curricular innovations that support students’ educational needs, thereby improving graduation outcomes.

**Priority 2: Community.** Alma College nurtures an inclusive and respectful campus community where students, faculty, staff, alumni and the general public can work together to learn, grow and serve others. We will ensure that our campus offers a richer, more diverse intellectual environment that acknowledges the increasingly global society into which our students will graduate.

**Priority 3: Responsible Stewardship.** The college’s resources will be managed responsibly to strengthen our financial position and maintain long-term fiscal health. We will energize supporters to expand the resource base. We will ensure that the physical campus is the equal of peer institutions and meets the needs of students, faculty and staff alike, emphasizing environmental sustainability.

The college has also updated the campus master plan and, consistent with that plan, the new provost will play a key role in the planning for two major academic building projects anticipated in the next five years—a major addition to the library to develop the Learning Commons and a comprehensive renovation of the Dow/Kapp Science Complex. Fundraising is underway for both projects and lead gifts have been obtained.
Search Profile and Qualifications

The successful candidate for the position of provost and vice president for academic affairs must be an experienced action-oriented administrator with a track record in developing new academic programs in a liberal arts setting and successfully leading an ambitious mission-centered academic agenda. We seek an exceptional communicator who invites diverse perspectives, works to build consensus, and provides clear feedback. The provost must be a strategic decision-maker and budget manager who demonstrates the values of honesty, integrity and transparency.

Qualified candidates will possess an earned doctorate and an exceptional record of academic achievement, including publication, service and scholarship sufficient to merit a tenured appointment to the rank of professor in one of the academic disciplines of Alma College. The college expects the provost to be an inspirational and innovative leader, a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion, and an active and engaged member of the community.

For full consideration, submissions should include:
- letter of interest that responds to the leadership opportunities outlined in this document
- curriculum vitae
- names, email addresses and phone numbers of five references. References will not be contacted without permission of the candidate.

Please submit application materials in PDF format to Dr. Janie Diels, Chair of the Provost Search Committee at AlmaProvost@alma.edu. Confidential inquiries may be addressed to Dr. Diels at that email as well. Review of applications will begin October 22, 2017.

Alma College is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, staff and student body.