

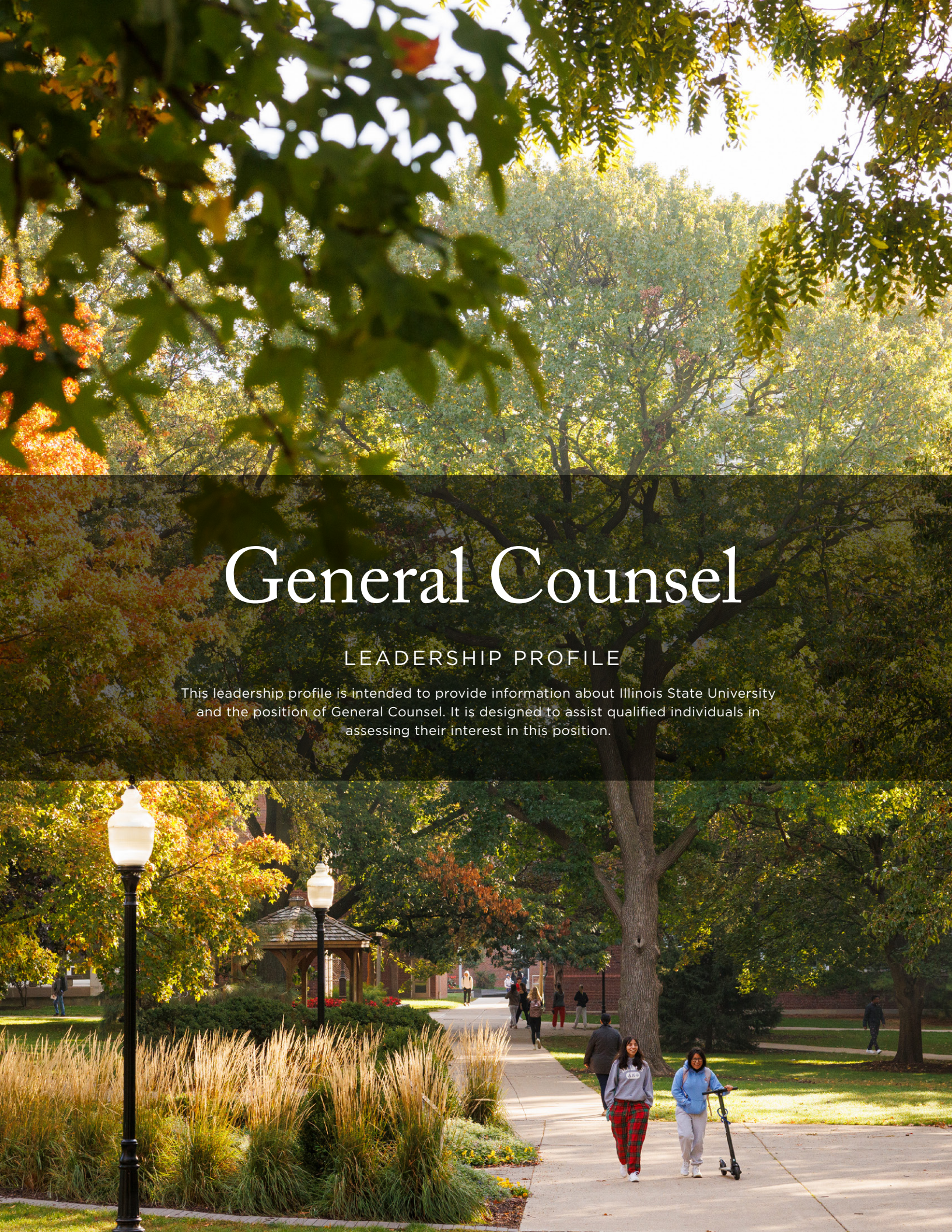


ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Illinois' first public university

General Counsel

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

2026



General Counsel

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

This leadership profile is intended to provide information about Illinois State University and the position of General Counsel. It is designed to assist qualified individuals in assessing their interest in this position.

About Illinois State University

On February 18, 1857, Illinois Gov. William Bissell signed a bill creating a normal school and establishing the Board of Education of the State of Illinois as its governing body. The bill stipulated that the permanent location would be the place that offered the most favorable inducements. Jesse W. Fell took up the campaign for Bloomington and obtained financial backing totaling \$141,000. Abraham Lincoln, acting as attorney for the Board, drew up the bond guaranteeing the Bloomington citizens would fulfill their financial pledges. Illinois State University was consequently founded as the first public institution of higher education in the state.

Established as a teacher education institution, Illinois State has developed into a multipurpose university with degree programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Seven academic colleges offer approximately 191 undergraduate majors, 110 master's programs, 20 doctoral degrees, and 42 certificate options. One of 12 public universities in Illinois, the alumni base has now grown to more than 243,000.

In fall 2025, Illinois State welcomed its largest freshman class in university history and enrolled a total of 21,994 students. Illinois State's students appreciate the average 19:1 student-faculty ratio. Professors teach in the classroom, mentor, and partner with both undergraduates and graduates in research endeavors. Within the faculty, 98 percent hold a terminal degree in their field. Students return to campus and progress through their degree programs, as shown by the University's high

fall 2024 to fall 2025 retention rate of new, full-time, first-time-in-college students of 81.9 percent. Illinois State is also praised for providing an affordable education, with *Washington Monthly* honoring the University as one of the Best Bang for the Buck Colleges in the Midwest. There are many other reasons that reveal Illinois State's competitive advantage as a premier undergraduate institution—from record-breaking fundraising to student civic engagement and scholarly breakthroughs. Each explains the reason Illinois State University is “Redbird Proud.”

Illinois State affirms and encourages community belonging and a respect for differences. The University fosters an environment characterized by cultural understanding and engagement, ethical behavior, and a commitment to social justice. The University supports a diverse faculty and staff who mentor a diverse student population. The institution endeavors to provide opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to participate productively in a global society and be civically engaged.

Campus diversity at Illinois State increasingly reflects the nation's changing demographics. In fall 2025, nearly 44 percent of new, full-time, first-time-in-college students came from traditionally underrepresented groups. Students are mentored by a faculty that includes numerous teacher-scholars recognized at national and international levels, all dedicated to superior teaching.





Community

Illinois State is in the central Illinois community of Bloomington-Normal, which has a combined population of 132,000. The community is home to Illinois Wesleyan University, Heartland Community College, OSF St. Joseph Medical Center, Carle BroMenn Medical Center, Rivian Motors, COUNTRY Financial, and State Farm Insurance Corporate Headquarters. The community has distinguished itself for its outstanding school systems and educational attainment, parks and recreation, health care, job growth, economic opportunity, and low crime. The University's hometown was ranked as one of the top three [best college towns in America](#) based on its affordability and safety, which its entertainment scene, community, and quality of life are listed as reasons it also ranks as one of the [Best Places to Live in the United States](#).

There are plentiful activities, cultural events, and entertainment opportunities for students and staff locally, with more opportunity to explore nearby. Normal is centrally located in Illinois, making it possible to drive or catch a train to major cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. All are within 2-3 hours from campus. Public transportation systems make the community easily accessible, with a train

and bus station within a few blocks of campus. There is also a regional airport with free parking that removes many of the hassles of flying. For more information on our community, please visit visitbn.org.

Ranked the No. 3 Best Small City for Job-Seeking College Grads, Bloomington-Normal offers multiple opportunities for students upon graduation. Illinois State partners with companies in the area, including State Farm Insurance and COUNTRY Financial—both with headquarters in the community—to provide internships and employment.

There are ample leisure activities as well, with five public golf courses in the area, several lakes, and the 45-plus miles of the hard-surfaced Constitution Trail. Converted from an abandoned railroad, the trail is bustling with individuals walking, biking, running, and blading. There are numerous restaurants and shops to visit as well. Uptown Normal is home to locally owned retail outlets with quality products and delectable food. There are unique movies, concerts, theatrical performances, and festivals to attend in every season.



Academics

Illinois State University is currently composed of seven academic colleges and Milner Library, each of which contains academic departments and centers designed to provide—singly and collectively—a comprehensive and robust academic experience for students. The University's academic programs are supported by the services and collections of Milner Library.

College of Applied Science and Technology houses the Department of Agriculture, Department of Criminal Justice Sciences, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Department of Health Sciences, School of Information Technology, School of Kinesiology and Recreation, Department of Military Science, and Department of Technology. The college also includes the University Farm; Horticulture Center; the Child Care Center; and Illinois State's well-known Gamma Phi Circus, the nation's oldest collegiate circus.

College of Arts and Sciences houses 16 departments and offers many majors and minors at the undergraduate level. Some of these programs are interdisciplinary, including African American Studies; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and Latin American and Latina/o Studies. Many departments have graduate programs leading to master's and doctoral degrees. The college houses many of Illinois State's study abroad opportunities, the Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Studies, and the University's NPR radio station, WGLT.

College of Business is known for its comprehensive undergraduate programs, highly regarded master's programs, and the outstanding accomplishments of its alumni. It is one of only 188 business colleges in the world to hold both business and accounting accreditation by AACSB International. It is also the only college of business in a public university in Illinois that has earned STEM designation for all its master's programs.

College of Education prepares early childhood through middle-level teachers, special educators, and administrators in addition to partnering with departments across the University to offer teacher education programs in a wide variety of academic programs and areas of study. With 44 accredited teacher education programs and offerings at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels, Illinois State remains true to its founding as Illinois State Normal University, specializing in teacher education. The College of Education is also home to Metcalf and University High School Laboratory Schools serving approximately 1,000 students.

College of Engineering enrolled its first cohort of students in fall 2025 with an initial offering of electrical, mechanical, and general engineering degree programs. The college is uniquely designed with a vision of student success, inclusive excellence, and workforce development. Leveraging Illinois State's reputation as a student-focused institution, the College of Engineering prepares students for success by melding theory and practice in core engineering disciplines and innovative cross-disciplinary experiences.

Mennonite College of Nursing offers nursing degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Building on the rich history of nursing education at Mennonite College, established in 1919, the College of Nursing was incorporated into the University in 1999 as Illinois State's sixth academic college. The college is proud of NCLEX and FNP pass rates consistently exceeding state and national averages and offers a state-of-the-art Nursing Simulation Center with a range of clinical placements that prepare students to practice in a complex health care system.

Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts includes the Wonsook Kim School of Art; the School of Music; School of Theatre, Dance, and Film; and the School of Creative Technologies. University Galleries, the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Theatre for Young Audiences, the String Project, and the Big Red Marching Machine are also housed within the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts. Notable alumni include Jane Lynch, Sean Hayes, Brendan Hunt, Nicolas Africano, LaRoyce Hawkins, Gary Cole, Judith Ivey, Terry Kinney, John Malkovich, Laurie Metcalf, Jeff Perry, Cecilia Suárez, and Michelle Williams.

Milner Library personnel work closely with academic units to provide services and research materials across the academic spectrum. Subject liaisons collaborate with faculty in all colleges, schools, and departments on information fluency instruction, collection management, and research assistance. Group study areas, quiet floors, collaboration stations, and a technology-rich environment support varied student learning styles. Library resources support textbook affordability initiatives, open-access publishing, and primary source research. Milner is home to distinctive collections in Special Collections and the University Archives as well as a Federal Depository Collection of government information beginning in 1858.

Strategic Plan

The University's strategic plan, *Excellence by Design: 2024-2030*, approved by the Board of Trustees in the spring of 2024, is a shining example of the University's commitment to shared governance, with faculty, staff, students, and campus stakeholders playing an active role in contributing to the creation of the document. Guided by a strong foundational design and building on our past strategic plan, *Educate • Connect • Elevate: Illinois State: 2018-2023*, the plan emphasizes Illinois State's commitment to excellence through continued improvement to shape an exciting future.

Excellence by Design: 2024-2030 lists our seven core values: Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Individualized Attention; Equity, Diversity, Access, and Belonging; Collaboration; Community and Civic Engagement; Respect; and Integrity. By acting on these values, we create a learning environment that results in our university being the first-choice public university in Illinois for high-achieving, motivated students who seek an individualized educational experience combined with the resources of a large university.

With its four strategic directions—Cultivate a Culture of Success and Belonging, Foster a Culture of Responsible Stewardship, Elevate Our Institutional Excellence, and Expand Mutually Beneficial Partnerships—*Excellence by Design: 2024-2030* serves as a practical guide for all units within the University for planning and resource allocation decisions. This plan guides Illinois State as it forges a new educational path across the next six years.



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

METRICS OF

Excellence



FIRST-CHOICE INSTITUTION

Illinois State has welcomed our largest freshman class in history. We enroll 21,994 students, while maintaining academic quality and small class sizes.



BANG FOR THE BUCK

Illinois State is ranked among the top universities for return on investment. *U.S. News & World Report* recognized the University as one of the Best Value Schools in the nation, and *Washington Monthly* included the University on the Best Bang for the Buck list in the Midwest. In addition, the University was also ranked among the top 30 percent of four-year higher education institutions for graduates' return on investment.



HIGH RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

Illinois State students complete their degrees on time. ISU's retention rate remains among the highest in the nation at over 81.9 percent, and our high graduation rate (67.3 percent) is well above the national average.



TOP PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Washington Monthly ranked the University in the top 106 out of all public national universities for the institution's contribution to the public good through social mobility, research, and public services. Illinois State made *U.S. News & World Report's* 2026 rankings of America's top public schools, at No. 122. In addition, the University was ranked in the upper echelon of *Money's* 2025 list of Best Colleges in America for quality education and affordability.



DIVERSE CAMPUS

Illinois State provides accessible opportunity and increasingly reflects the nation's changing demographics. In fall 2025, nearly 44 percent of new,

full-time, first-time-in-college students came from traditionally underrepresented groups.



RECORD FUNDRAISING

Illinois State University raised more than \$44.5 million in private support, reaching its highest private support total in university history. Through these donations, more than 4,640 scholarships were awarded last fiscal year.



TOP COLLEGE TOWN

The University's hometown ranks as one of the top 3 best college towns in America based on its affordability and safety, while its entertainment scene, community, and quality of life are listed as reasons it also ranks as one of the Best Places to Live in the United States.



MILITARY FRIENDLY SCHOOL

Illinois State supports veterans and those in the military. We are ranked a top 10 Military Friendly School by VOTORY.



CIVICALLY ENGAGED CAMPUS

Illinois State's campuswide commitment to our core value of civic engagement has earned us recognition with the Effective Classification for Community Engagement, as an Excellence and Innovation Award for Civic Learning and Community Engagement recipient, and as a Voter Friendly Campus.



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LEADERSHIP

Dr. Aondover Tarhule, President

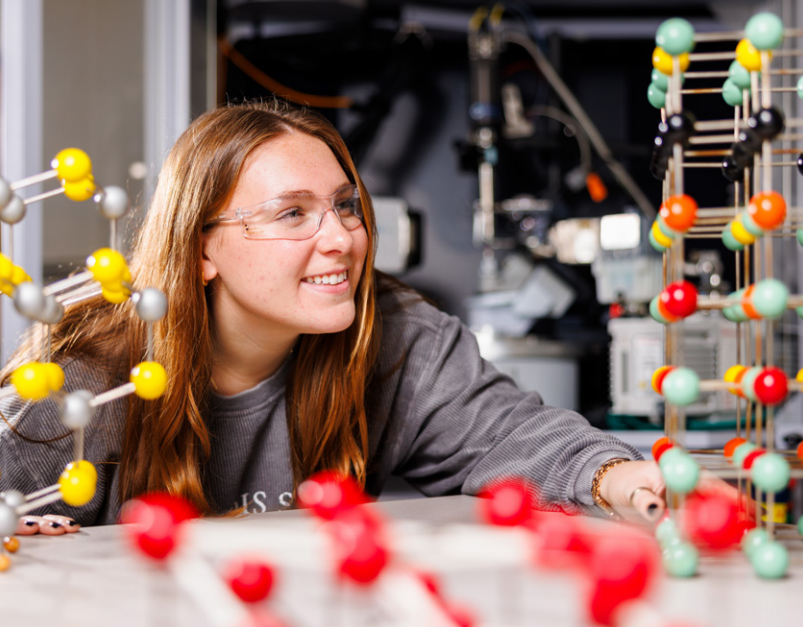


Dr. Aondover Tarhule joined Illinois State University in 2020 as vice president for academic affairs and provost and currently serves as president. His immediate prior administrative appointment was vice provost and dean of the Graduate School at Binghamton University (State University of New York). Before that, he was executive associate dean and department chair of the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences at the University of Oklahoma. In these positions, he worked on creating new academic programs, increasing student enrollment, increasing diversity, faculty retention, shared governance, and international partnerships and linkages.

Having earned master's degrees and a doctoral degree in geography from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Tarhule received a postdoctoral fellowship from the Canadian Science Advisory Council to conduct research at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Tarhule earned an additional master's degree in environmental resources planning and a bachelor's degree in geography, both from the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

A broadly trained physical geographer, Tarhule has wide-ranging research interests in hydroclimatic variability, droughts, water resources scarcity, and climate information dissemination and use. His scholarly research has appeared in prestigious international journals, including *Nature* (*Scientific Reports*, *Climate Perspectives*), *Journal of Hydrology*, *Remote Sensing*, and *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, and book chapters. His efforts as principal investigator (PI) or co-PI have resulted in more than \$5 million in grants from such agencies as the National Science Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, the National Institutes of Health, and the United States Geological Survey. He has served on the editorial board of the *Scientific World Journal* and the *African Geographical Review*, and as guest editor on several journals including *Remote Sensing*, *Atmosphere*, and *Climate Research*.

Tarhule has served on committees of prominent national and international organizations, including as consultant to the World Bank (Climate Risk Assessment of the Niger River Basin Sustainable Development Action Plan) and member of the Executive Committee of the Board on Oceans, Atmosphere, and Climate, and Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. He is a member of the College of Mentors of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and an executive board member of the Walker Institute, University of Reading, in England.



General Counsel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Illinois State University, a nationally ranked public R2 university committed to teaching, scholarship, civic engagement, and inclusive excellence, invites applications and nominations for the position General Counsel. The University recognizes that our commitment to the inclusion of all students, faculty, and staff enriches the educational and cultural experiences of the entire campus and greater community. To that end, we invite applications from individuals who share these values and will work to advance the University's continued commitment to equity, diversity, access, and belonging for all.

Reporting directly to the President, the General Counsel is responsible for all legal matters affecting Illinois State University and provides legal counsel to the President and administrative officers. The General Counsel will ensure the efficient and prompt delivery of legal services to Illinois State University; make periodic reports to the President on outstanding litigation matters; provide strategic and tactical guidance and direction in all aspects of the management of the Office of the General Counsel, including personnel and budget; establish general guidelines for legal services; coordinate legal interpretations and opinions as to policies, procedures, rules and regulations affecting operating procedures, personnel and students; maintain current knowledge of the latest national, state and local developments affecting Illinois State University; provide assistance to the President as requested; serves on the President's Cabinet; and other duties as assigned by the President.

The preferred start date for the position is December 1, 2026.

Required *and* preferred qualifications

Required qualifications

1. J.D. or LL.B. degree from an ABA accredited law school.
2. Ten years as a practicing attorney in a complex higher education, government, non-profit, corporate or other organization with comparable complexity; five years of that experience in higher education law.
3. Admission to the Illinois bar by the time of appointment, or an active license to practice law in good standing in at least one U.S. jurisdiction and eligibility for a limited license under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 716.
4. Excellent independent judgment and decision-making skills.
5. Excellent oral and written communication skills.
6. Strong management and interpersonal skills and ability to collaborate.
7. Experience supervising/managing other attorneys, department staff, outside consultants, and budgets.

Preferred qualifications

1. General Counsel experience or Associate General Counsel experience in public higher education in Illinois.
2. Admission to Federal Courts in Illinois.



Job Duties

1. Provide leadership and strategic guidance on state and federal issues impacting University legal priorities, as well as University-wide efforts to implement efficiency measures and best practices that reduce overall operating costs, champion compliance and minimize exposure to liability for programs and activities.
2. Supervise university attorneys and paralegals; coordinate day-to-day responsibilities of the Office of General Counsel and provide dotted line interactions with the Athletics Compliance office.
3. Collaborate with campus and shared governance partners in the review and articulation of university policy and procedures to ensure consistency and alignment with legal best practices.
4. Consult with university attorneys, campus partners and outside counsel on matters related to immigration and collective bargaining. Provide direction and make recommendations that align with university priorities and state and federal law.
5. Represent the University and/or select and supervise outside counsel in matters filed with administrative agencies or in the courts, including coordinating with the Illinois Attorney General's office, and work to ensure that cases are successfully concluded and any associated costs are minimized.
6. Interpret and implement Board of Trustee regulations and federal and state laws, rules and regulations. Coordinate with and assist the outside legal counsel to the Board of Trustees.
7. Draft and review contracts.
8. Review judicial decisions, legislative, and governmental regulatory developments to make recommendations with respect to compliance procedures and strategies including promoting university-wide understanding of and compliance with state and federal laws and regulations and the university compliance program. Research and draft legal memoranda and options for use by the President and other administrative staff in the performance of their duties.
9. Advise and assist with investigations and compliance reviews by governmental agencies and external audits.
10. Provide training to university personnel on a wide range of matters.
11. Serves as University officer and agent to respond to inquiries about institutional operations having legal or potential legal consequences.
12. Performs other duties as assigned.



How to apply

Greenwood Asher & Associates is assisting Illinois State University in this search. Applications and nominations are now being accepted. Inquiries and nominations should be directed to Kyle Pybus-Jerome and/or Jim Johnsen from Greenwood Asher & Associates. Application materials should include the following:

- A letter of interest that clearly states the applicant's qualifications for the position
- A current resume

Candidates should also provide the names and contact information of three references. References will not be contacted without prior knowledge and approval from candidates.

To apply, please use this link:

<https://jobsearch.illinoisstate.edu/jobs/general-counsel-normal-illinois-illinois-united-states>

We strongly encourage submitting application materials as PDF attachments. The search will be conducted with a commitment of confidentiality for candidates until finalists are selected. Initial screening of applications will begin immediately and will continue until an appointment is made. For best consideration, applications and nominations should be provided by August 28, 2026.

Please direct inquiries and nominations to:

Kyle Pybus-Jerome

Senior Executive Search Consultant

Email: kylepybusjerome@greenwoodsearch.com

Jim Johnsen

Vice President of Executive Search

Email: jimjohnsen@greenwoodsearch.com





ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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Illinois State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and anti-harassment. Illinois State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, order of protection, gender identity and expression, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, genetic information, unfavorable military discharge, or status as a veteran in employment, educational programs and activities, or admissions. Inquiries or complaints may be addressed by contacting the director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access by email at EqualOpportunity@IllinoisState.edu, by calling (309) 438-3383, or by mailing to the office at Illinois State University, Campus Box 1280, Normal, IL 61790.