



Columbia University
Associate Vice President,
Student Financial Services
New York, New York

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Columbia University seeks a strategic, forward-thinking, and data-minded executive who will provide leadership as the Associate Vice President, Student Financial Services (AVP). Reporting to the Vice President, Finance and Controller, the Associate Vice President will advance the operations of the Student Financial Services portfolio to support services to students and campus stakeholders. The AVP leads a team of 50 direct and indirect reports who are responsible for University Financial Aid, Student Accounts/Accounting, and Financial Aid compliance within the context of a premier research university. As a senior leader, the AVP will have the opportunity to shape policies and processes that will build upon existing strengths of the SFS operation, while simultaneously identifying opportunities for operational maximization.

About Columbia University

[Columbia University](#) is a private, non-denominational research university with world-class undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs. Founded in 1754 as King's College by royal charter of King George II, Columbia is the oldest institution of higher learning in the state of New York and the fifth oldest in the United States.

Today, the University is an intellectual community that includes over 35,000 students, and more than 18,000 full time faculty and staff who work continually to expand their mission of teaching, research, patient care, and public service. Columbia's distinguished faculty, alumni, and student body are expanding the boundaries of knowledge in medicine, science, the arts, humanities, and the professions. Columbia University offers an outstanding and comprehensive array of academic programs; these include three undergraduate schools, fourteen graduate and professional schools, a world-renowned medical center, four affiliated colleges and seminaries, eighteen libraries, and more than one hundred research centers and institutes.

Columbia's talented students and faculty from some 150 countries engage each other in the breadth of cultural, scientific, and business enterprises that make New York one of the most exciting places in the world. One of the first research universities in the United States, Columbia's preeminence is reflected by a steady stream of pioneering discoveries and intellectual contributions. Active government grants and contracts, including research, exceeded \$1.2 billion in fiscal 2022.

Columbia is committed to supporting students financially. In April 2021, Columbia President Lee Bollinger announced the [Columbia Student Support Initiative](#), a new effort dedicated to raising \$1.4 billion in financial assistance for students by June 2025 and involving all of Columbia's schools. This special campaign will add to existing resources for undergraduate scholarships,

graduate fellowships, and other forms of assistance that are critical to student success and wellbeing. Columbia University has also implemented [additional enhancements](#) to financial aid that will support undergraduate students attending Columbia College, Columbia Engineering, and Columbia School of General Studies beginning in the 2022-2023 academic year. The University has a long history of providing support for tuition, fees, and room and board, and it continues to focus on meeting the financial aid needs of students, intended to increase access and support families. These include an increase of the threshold of family income for aid and full tuition grants, resulting in \$200 million in scholarships and grants to undergraduates in the Columbia College and the School of Engineering this year, where more than one-half of students receive financial assistance to attend Columbia.

Columbia is both global and local in focus. The University is engaged in a wide range of educational and research initiatives around the world, reflecting the belief that academic institutions have a responsibility to provide analyses and perspectives that inform policy and broaden world understanding of the critical issues of our time. The University currently has ten global centers, the newest in Athens Greece was announced in November 2022.

In New York, the University is creating a new, environmentally sustainable urban campus in a former industrial area, called Manhattanville, between the historic Morningside Heights campus and the University's Medical Center. These new academic facilities and public open spaces will enhance Columbia's contributions to New York City as a global center of new ideas, scientific innovation, economic vitality, and cultural richness.

Mission Statement

Columbia University is one of the world's most important centers of research and at the same time a distinctive and distinguished learning environment for undergraduates and graduate students in many scholarly and professional fields. The University recognizes the importance of its location in New York City and seeks to link its research and teaching to the vast resources of a great metropolis. It seeks to attract a diverse and international faculty, staff, and student body, to support research and teaching on global issues, and to create academic relationships with many countries and regions. It expects all areas of the University to advance knowledge and learning at the highest level and to convey the products of its efforts to the world.

Leadership, Office of the Controller

Mark Hawkins, MBA, Vice President, Finance and Controller

Mark Hawkins has held the role of Vice President, Finance and Controller since August 2018. Prior to moving into this role, Mark was the Vice President of Financial Operations and Compliance and prior to that, Deputy Controller. In his current role, Mark oversees Research Policy and Indirect Cost, Financial Reporting and Operations, Payroll, Benefits Pension Accounting and Reporting, Audits and Compliance, Student Financial Services and Tax.

Before joining Columbia in 2013, Mark spent over ten years with DePaul University in Chicago, including five years as Controller. Before that, he held various financial positions with Deloitte & Touche LLP, Arthur Andersen and Andersen Consulting. He currently serves as a board member and treasurer for Howard Brown Health, a health and social services provider in Chicago.

Mark has a bachelor's degree in accounting and a master's in business administration, with a concentration in change management/leadership from DePaul University.

Student Financial Services

[Student Financial Services](#) (SFS) comprises three departments: University Financial Aid Office, Student Accounts / Accounting and Business Management (Bursar and related functions), and Financial Aid Compliance:

- **Financial Aid:** The University operates in a School-based model in which many direct student financial aid functions are administered by the University's various schools (strategy, packaging, student service) through policies, systems and processes overseen by this role. The AVP convenes school-based colleagues to communicate emerging and routine compliance matters and convey to the schools any required policy, process, or system changes. The University's financial aid system is administered by SFS as is all university-level reporting on aid and related compliance. In addition, some graduate schools have outsourced various aspects of aid management to SFS Financial Aid; for those schools, SFS serves as the packaging and student-facing aid team. Centralized loan management, withdrawal processing, and financial literacy programs are also managed by SFS. This team comprises 18 individuals, as well as indirect oversight of the schools' financial aid directors.
- **Student Accounts:** For bursar related functions, through a team of 30, the SFS team oversees the complete life cycle of the student account including student billing configuration and bill issuance for over \$1.5 billion in transactions, acceptance of all tuition payments (individual or third party), related systems, resolution of complex student billing matters from students and school colleagues, collections on current and past-due accounts, accounting and reconciliation of related transactions, and a federal work study office which assists students with related employment postings and onboarding.

Over the past few years, the team has implemented a number of enhancements to improve the students' experience, payment options, communication channels, and receivables managements. This work will continue and the role will have an opportunity to influence a best-in-class student billing and payment experience and related operational support.

- **Financial Aid Compliance:** The Financial Aid Compliance team comprises two individuals and serves as a resource to the SFS team and the Schools on the emergence and

application of new federal aid compliance requirements, researches unique issues, and conducts routine compliance quality assurance efforts over the operations of the schools and central (SFS) units.

The Opportunity

Reporting to the Vice President, Finance and Controller, the Associate Vice President, Student Financial Services, is responsible for the overall administration, leadership, and operation of the departments which comprise centralized Student Financial Services functions for the University. The AVP is responsible for the management and delivery of fiscal services to the 32,000 students enrolled at the University in its various schools. The AVP serves as the central oversight role for financial aid and the bursar functions, leading fiscal operations related to the billing and collection of over \$1.5 billion in tuition and student charges and the compliant awarding of over \$800 million in institutional/federal financial aid.

The AVP has responsibility for a staff of 50 and an operational budget of over \$8 million, and indirect oversight of school-based financial aid operations. The position collaborates closely with the University Registrar to ensure that the Student Service Center (reporting to the Registrar) is meeting the needs of the student population and is communicating accurate policies and practices. The AVP provides critical input to the VP, Finance and Controller and other constituents on relevant strategic initiatives and functionality requirements for student information systems.

Identified opportunities for this role include:

- **Operations and Financial Management:** The AVP is responsible for the coordinated management, development, and implementation of all SFS strategies, policies, and processes. The AVP ensures an efficient, student-friendly, and compliant student financial services environment. The AVP will work closely with stakeholders to identify the necessary resources for the continued delivery of exceptional student financial services across Columbia University.
- **Strategic Leadership:** Leveraging data and KPIs, the AVP will architect data-informed measures and strategies. They will develop a methodology to assess the impact of SFS across the University, with a commitment to continual process improvement in order to achieve institutional goals and operational optimization. Working with both centralized and matrixed staff, the AVP will lead and influence a culture of excellence and ongoing collaboration.
- **Resource Management and Service Delivery:** The AVP will navigate the evolving landscape of student finance systems and will develop processes and strategies to enhance operational efficiencies and customer service. As the University implements a new student information system, the AVP will embrace a service-oriented approach to technology as a method to further amplify the impact of SFS.

- **Financial Aid:** In partnership with representatives of Columbia University schools and divisions, the AVP plans and implements financial aid strategies and processes for students across the 17 schools. The AVP oversees Columbia's aid policies, including need analysis methods and packaging procedures and the Federal Work Study program.
- **Compliance Oversight:** Supported by the compliance team, the AVP develops systems, processes, and policies that mitigate risk in the context of the Student Financial Services portfolio at a premier research institution. The AVP ensures compliance with Title IV regulations, annual audit reporting, NCAA reporting mandates, and institutional policies as it relates to financial aid and student accounts.
- **Communication and Community Relationships:** The AVP coordinates campus-wide communication regarding key initiatives and updates on behalf of the Student Financial Services team. They produce internally and externally facing reports and documentation regarding the SFS operations, student accounts, financial aid, and compliance for a diverse audience of stakeholders. The AVP is driven by the capacity to build meaningful partnerships with students, faculty, and staff in order to respond to challenges, while developing solutions with measurable deliverables to achieve resolution.

Candidate Profile

The AVP is an experienced financial services leader within a higher education environment who will bring their skills to further elevate the operations of an established team. The AVP brings enthusiasm and expertise into this role, along with an agile mindset to quickly attain the understanding of the existing systems and structures in which they will lead. They are strategically minded and can effectively cultivate partnerships with a diverse group of administrators.

The successful candidate will have unparalleled communication, data analysis, and reporting skills with an attention to detail. They have formidable project management skills and an established practice of developing evidence-based strategies with measurable impact. The AVP has an evidenced track record of leading centralized and matrixed teams in a high-pressure environment and developing processes that optimize efficiency and impact. The successful candidate has significant experience in risk management and compliance in the context of a dynamic, global, and premier research environment.

In addition, strong candidates will offer:

- A bachelor's degree is required; advanced degree strongly preferred.
- A demonstrated ability to manage multiple priorities and lead team efforts required. Must be able to problem-solve, troubleshoot, and work independently in a dynamic environment.
- The ability to negotiate issues, resolve problems and have strong influencing skills.

- The ability to work well with all levels of management, both internally and externally, be flexible in nature, and have sound judgment with a collaborative style that fosters teamwork and cooperation beyond the immediate team to the broader organization.
- Experience supervising, mentoring, and motivating a diverse, high-performing team, and experience with well-established management practices including staff development, organization, prioritization, and accountability.
- Thorough understanding of the legal landscape and compliance relating to college and university financial aid policies and practices governing undergraduate financial aid and student financial services in a highly visible institution.
- Experience using both quantitative and qualitative data across a broad array of metrics; developing comprehensible data and analytics on financial aid and on-campus student employment.
- A record of collegiality, collaboration, consultation, and fostering a spirit of teamwork among and between members of various departments.
- A high level of transparency, integrity, and discretion.
- Demonstrated understanding of recent technologies to design and maintain custom system integration for application and awarding systems, software, reporting functions, data interfaces, and all related IT issues.
- Experience with third party contract negotiations
- A passion for excellent customer service and commitment to exceptional quality.

Compensation & Benefits

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. Salary for the role is currently anticipated to range from \$225,000 - \$260,000, commensurate with experience, skills, and the qualifications required for this role. In addition, Columbia University offers a generous employee health and benefits package.

Contact

Amy Sugin and Laura Bertonazzi of Koya Partners have been exclusively retained for this search. To express your interest in this role please submit your materials [here](#). All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Koya Partners is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email NonprofitSearchOps@divsearch.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

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*Equal Opportunity Employer / Disability / Veteran
Columbia University is committed to the hiring of qualified local residents.*

About Koya Partners

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