



Rice University
Vice President and Director of Athletics

Executive Summary

Rice University seeks an innovative, strategic and accomplished leader to serve as its next Vice President and Director of Athletics at an important moment for the university and intercollegiate athletics.

Under the leadership of President Reginald DesRoches, Rice is experiencing a period of significant growth and investment. The university is expanding its student body and faculty, strengthening its research enterprise, investing in its physical and global footprint, and advancing [*Momentous: Personalized Scale for Global Impact*](#), a 10-year strategic plan designed to increase Rice's national and global impact while preserving the highly personalized experience and culture that distinguish the institution. Importantly, intercollegiate athletics is an explicit component of that vision, with *Momentous* calling for competitive athletic excellence that enriches campus culture through strategic investment, enhanced facilities and student-athlete opportunities, and greater engagement across the Rice and Houston communities.

Rice Athletics enters this next chapter with significant momentum and a strengthened foundation for future success. The department has expanded its investment in student-athlete opportunities and support, adapted to the changing NIL and student-athlete compensation environment, recruited new leadership across several high-profile programs, and continued to advance competitive and academic excellence. The university has also embarked upon the \$120 million Gateway Project, a transformational initiative that will modernize historic Rice Stadium and further connect Athletics, campus, Rice Village and the greater Houston community.

The next Vice President and Director of Athletics will build upon this momentum while helping define the next era of Rice Athletics. Reporting directly to President DesRoches and serving as a member of the president's leadership council, the successful candidate will be expected to build programs that compete for and win conference championships in every sport; make Athletics a driver of Rice's national visibility and reputation; strategically generate and deploy resources and deliver a strong return on the university's investment; navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of college athletics; and provide an exceptional experience for student-athletes seeking to compete at the highest level while pursuing one of the nation's most rigorous educations.

About Rice University

Founded in 1912 and located in Houston, Texas, Rice University is a globally oriented private research university known for academic excellence, groundbreaking research, an intimate learning environment and a distinctive culture of collaboration and community. A member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), Rice combines the resources and ambition of a leading research institution with a highly personalized educational experience and distinctive residential college system.

Rice is experiencing significant institutional momentum. The university's student body has grown to approximately 9,200 students, including approximately 5,000 undergraduates, while faculty and research activity have also expanded significantly. Applications for undergraduate admission have grown 25% in four years and surpassed 38,000 for fall 2026, reflecting unprecedented and surging demand for a Rice education. The university continues to make significant investments in academic programs, research, faculty, new partnerships, campus infrastructure and its growing global presence.

That growth is guided by *Momentous: Personalized Scale for Global Impact*. The strategic plan establishes an ambitious vision for Rice's next decade centered on unparalleled personalized education, breakthrough research and discoveries, a vibrant and welcoming community, and expanded national and global impact. Athletics is positioned as an important contributor to that vision and to Rice's aspirations for an increasingly vibrant campus community.

Rice's location in Houston provides another distinctive advantage. One of the nation's largest and most diverse cities, Houston is home to the world's largest medical complex, the Texas Medical Center, as well as the second-most Fortune 500 headquarters of any U.S. metro area, a thriving arts and cultural community, a highly philanthropic business community and a vibrant professional sports environment with major franchises and facilities. Rice's location creates considerable opportunity for Athletics to deepen relationships with alumni, donors, corporate partners, fans and the broader Houston community.

About Rice Athletics

As a member of the American Conference, Rice Athletics competes at the NCAA Division I level and will sponsor 17 varsity sports with the addition of women's golf in 2026-27. Rice has a proud athletics tradition that includes conference championships, Olympians, professional athletes and the 2003 College World Series national championship.

Rice student-athletes consistently distinguish themselves academically while competing at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics. During fall 2025, seven programs recorded their highest semester GPA in program history, while Rice student-athletes collectively achieved the highest overall GPA in department history. Competitively, Rice programs have continued to achieve at a high level, highlighted by women's basketball capturing the 2025–26 American Conference regular-season championship, volleyball winning the 2025 conference regular-season title and advancing to the NCAA Tournament, football earning its third bowl appearance in four seasons, and women's soccer spending much of the 2025 season nationally ranked.

The university has also made significant investments to position Athletics for the changing collegiate environment. Rice has expanded scholarship opportunities, strengthened institutional support for NIL, created an Associate Athletic Director for NIL and General Manager position, and launched the South Main Fund to support NIL opportunities for Rice student-athletes. The addition of women's golf and return of diving have further expanded opportunities for female student-athletes.

Rice remains equally committed to preparing student-athletes for success beyond competition. Through SOAR and its Flight Plan curriculum, student-athletes receive comprehensive opportunities for leadership, career and personal development, civic engagement and professional preparation. Rice's accomplished alumni network, with leaders across medicine, science, engineering, law, business, finance, public service and professional sports, provides another distinctive resource for student-athletes.

The \$120 million Gateway Project represents the next significant chapter in Rice's investment in Athletics. Anchored by a comprehensive modernization of Rice Stadium, the project will create enhanced premium and hospitality spaces, modern media and broadcast capabilities, improved fan amenities, a new covered practice pavilion and stronger physical connections between the west side of campus and Rice Village. The project provides a generational opportunity to enhance recruiting, game-day atmosphere, revenue generation and engagement with the Rice and Houston communities.

Position Summary

The Vice President and Director of Athletics will report directly to President Reginald DesRoches and serve as a member of the president's leadership council. The Vice President and Director of Athletics will provide

strategic, operational and cultural leadership for Rice's intercollegiate athletics enterprise while ensuring alignment with the broader mission, values and strategic priorities of the university.

The next leader will inherit meaningful momentum while assuming the role during one of the most consequential periods in the history of college athletics. Rice seeks a forward-thinking and entrepreneurial leader capable of navigating a rapidly changing financial, legal and competitive environment while leveraging the university's academic reputation, institutional resources, unique position in Houston and Texas, alumni network and commitment to Athletics to create sustainable competitive advantage.

Specifically, the new director will:

- Provide visionary and strategic leadership for Rice Athletics, setting championship expectations for every program and establishing a culture of competitive and academic excellence, accountability, collaboration and integrity while ensuring alignment with the mission, values and strategic priorities of Rice University.
- Serve as an engaged university leader and collaborative campus partner, building strong and trusted relationships with the President, Board of Trustees, university leadership, faculty, staff and students and actively participating in broader institutional planning, decision-making and initiatives.
- Provide effective organizational and operational leadership for Athletics, establishing clear priorities and accountability, managing a complex budget and organizational structure, and ensuring resources, policies, processes and personnel are aligned to effectively support the department's goals.
- Recruit, retain, develop and evaluate outstanding coaches, administrators and staff; foster a positive and collaborative culture; and provide the leadership, communication and professional development necessary for individuals and teams to thrive.
- Provide an exceptional student-athlete experience grounded in Rice's distinctive academic environment, maintaining meaningful engagement with student-athletes and supporting their academic achievement, competitive excellence, health and well-being, leadership development and preparation for life beyond Rice; work with the Office of the Provost to strengthen partnerships between Athletics and academic advising in support of student success.
- Develop and execute strategies to position Rice competitively within the evolving Division I athletics environment, including revenue sharing, NIL, student-athlete benefits, roster and scholarship management, conference governance models; in partnership with the President, build conference and national relationships.
- Provide strategic and disciplined financial leadership, with accountability for delivering a return on the university's significant operating and capital investment in Athletics, while expanding revenue through philanthropy, corporate partnerships, sponsorships, ticketing, premium experiences, multimedia, events and other emerging opportunities; work collaboratively with University Development and Alumni Relations to cultivate relationships and inspire philanthropic investment.
- Partner with university leadership and key stakeholders in the continued planning and execution of the Gateway Project and other facility priorities, ensuring Rice's athletics infrastructure supports competitive success, recruiting, student-athlete development and an enhanced campus and fan experience.
- Strengthen the connection between Rice Athletics and its many constituencies, creating meaningful engagement among student-athletes, coaches, faculty, staff and students while increasing enthusiasm, attendance and support among alumni, donors, fans, corporate partners and the greater Houston community.
- Elevate the national profile of Rice Athletics and the university, working with the Office of Public Affairs on brand, marketing and media strategies that expand national exposure, take full advantage of the Houston media market and strengthen Rice's reputation.
- Ensure the highest standards of institutional and departmental integrity, compliance and governance, maintaining accountability for adherence to university policies and applicable conference, NCAA, legal

and regulatory requirements while representing Rice effectively within the American Conference and national collegiate athletics community.

Qualifications:

The successful candidate will be an accomplished and collaborative leader with the vision, judgment and adaptability necessary to lead Rice Athletics during a dynamic period for intercollegiate athletics. Candidates should demonstrate:

- A bachelor's degree is required; advanced degree strongly preferred.
- A minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible leadership and administrative experience in intercollegiate athletics or a closely related field is preferred, including significant managerial and supervisory responsibility;
- Demonstrated success leading a complex organization, including strategic planning, financial management, resource allocation and organizational development;
- A sophisticated understanding of the evolving financial, legal, regulatory and competitive landscape of Division I athletics;
- Strong, well-established relationships across conference and national collegiate athletics leadership, and the credibility to advance Rice's interests in conference governance;
- A record of recruiting, developing and retaining high-performing teams and fostering a collaborative, accountable and inclusive organizational culture;
- Proven ability to build trusted relationships and work effectively across a complex institution with senior leadership, faculty, staff, students, governing boards and other key stakeholders;
- Demonstrated success in revenue generation, fundraising and cultivating meaningful relationships with alumni, donors, corporate partners and external constituencies;
- A record of raising national visibility and reputation through brand, marketing and media strategy, including experience engaging national and major-market media;
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, sound judgment, emotional intelligence, political and business acumen, and the executive presence necessary to represent Rice University effectively; and
- A demonstrated commitment to academic and competitive excellence, student-athlete well-being and development, and the values and mission of higher education.

Application Process:

Rice University invites nominations and applications or expressions of interest to be submitted to the search firm assisting the university. Applications must include a cover letter, resume or curriculum vitae, and a list of references. For full consideration, application materials should be submitted to Parker Executive Search's [website](#). Confidential review of materials will begin immediately and continue until the appointment is made.

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