



Vice President, Administration & Finance, Chief Financial Officer Profile

October 2025

University of
La Verne

Executive Summary



The University of La Verne invites nominations and applications for the position of Vice President for Administration & Finance and Chief Financial Officer (VPAF/CFO). The position offers an exciting opportunity to lead a thriving university 35 miles outside of Los Angeles that offers a distinctive and relevant educational experience to a diverse population of students, preparing them for successful careers and a commitment to lifelong learning across the liberal arts and professional programs. La Verne boasts a strong and stable enrollment, a healthy endowment and university budget.

La Verne is seeking an experienced and forward-thinking finance executive who is looking to lead change and transformation in a dynamic environment while balancing competing demands and prioritizing resources. Reporting directly to

President Risa Dickson, the VPAF/CFO will be a dynamic and visionary leader who will work with senior executives and financial stakeholders to facilitate the University's strategic, financial, and operational vision and goals. The VPAF/CFO will be influential in developing and implementing financial strategy through leadership and oversight of diverse functional areas, including finance and business services, facilities, human resources, and campus safety.

The ideal candidate will have the background and ingenuity to establish a clear financial vision for La Verne and the resolve and commitment to develop and motivate others to achieve desired outcomes within the administration and finance teams and with other shared governance stakeholders.

The University of La Verne – An Overview



About the University

Founded in 1891, the University of La Verne is composed of the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the LaFetra College of Education, the Cástulo de la Rocha College of Health and Community Well-Being, and the College of Law and Public Service, five regional campuses throughout Southern California, and robust online offerings. Scholastic opportunities abound, thanks to more than 60 undergraduate programs, more than 20 master's degrees, six doctorates, and over 20 credential and certificate programs.

Across all of the colleges, La Verne's approximately 4,700 traditional-age and adult learners help make the federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution one of the most diverse universities in the nation. Nearly half of the traditional undergraduates are first-generation students – the first in their immediate families to attend College. More than 70 percent of University of La Verne students receive some form of financial aid. University of La Verne employs more than 200 full-time professors and has a 14:1 student-to-faculty ratio. The average class size is 16 students.

The University is also a pioneer in adult education, offering accelerated programs for adult learners at the La Verne Campus, regional campuses, and online.

University of La Verne is dedicated to the belief that a quality, values-based education enriches the human condition by engendering community engagement, scholarly accomplishment, and professionalism. Along with encouraging diversity, the University focuses on the individual as evidenced by its small class sizes. Professors are personally engaged and committed to helping students achieve their academic and professional goals.

University of La Verne is home to 85,000+ alumni worldwide and is ranked 7th for social mobility by *U.S. News & World Report*.

The University of La Verne (ULV) is accredited by Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) and initially accredited in 1955. The most recent WSCUC Commission action was February 2024 and May 2025, which requires ULV to submit an Interim Report to the WSCUC Commission in November 1, 2025. The next Offsite Review will be in Fall 2027 with an Accreditation Visit in Spring 2028.

The University of La Verne – An Overview

Mission and Values

The University of La Verne offers a distinctive and relevant educational experience to a diverse population of traditional-age, adult, and graduate learners, preparing them for successful careers and a commitment to life-long learning across the liberal arts and professional programs.

Core Values of the University of La Verne:

- **Ethical Reasoning:** The University affirms a value system that actively supports peace with justice, respect of individuals and humanity, and the health of the planet and its people. Students are reflective about personal, professional, and societal values that support professional and social responsibility.
- **Diversity and Inclusivity:** The University supports a diverse and inclusive environment where students recognize and benefit from the life experiences and viewpoints of other students, faculty, and staff.
- **Lifelong Learning:** The University promotes intellectual curiosity and the importance of lifelong learning. It teaches students how to learn, to think critically, to be capable of original research, and to access and integrate information to prepare them for continued personal and professional growth.
- **Civic and Community Engagement:** The University asserts a commitment to improving and enhancing local, regional, and global communities.

Academics

At the University of La Verne, one's education extends far beyond the classroom and even graduation. Through experiential learning, La Verne students continue to grow personally and professionally years after degree completion. Academic programs are offered at the central La Verne campus, online, and at several regional campuses at both traditional and accelerated paces, so students can pursue degrees in a variety of formats and time frames.

La Verne students are made up of traditional undergraduates, as well as graduate, adult, and online learners. The average student-faculty ratio is 14:1 and 66% of classes have no more than 19 students, which allows professors to focus on putting the student first. La Verne faculty are experts and renowned scholars that work closely with students, many times one-on-one, to provide personal attention.



There are five colleges at the University of La Verne:

- **The College of Arts and Sciences** offers over 50 majors, minors, and certificates.
- **The College of Business** offers several undergraduate majors and minors, as well as seven masters programs and doctorates in Business Administration (DBA) and Public Administration (DPA).
- **The LaFetra College of Education** includes several undergraduate and master's degrees, as well as a doctorate in organizational leadership (EdD).
- **The Cástulo de la Rocha College of Health and Community Well-Being** offers 10 degree options, including four undergraduate programs, five masters' degrees, and the doctorate in clinical psychology.
- **The College of Law and Public Service** program is offered at its own campus in Ontario, CA, and includes dual-degree options with business administration, public administration, and educational leadership.

In addition to the main campus, University of La Verne also has regional campuses in Bakersfield, Burbank, Irvine, Ontario, and Santa Clarita. Classes at regional campuses are accelerated and flexible, with most courses meeting in the evenings and on weekends. Many programs are also offered online, giving adult learners even more options to earn a degree while still working. La Verne also offers degrees at Vandenberg SFB and Naval Base Ventura County and at select community colleges.

Academics at La Verne are centered around theory and practice. That's why professors give students the opportunities to apply concepts in real-world scenarios. The University strives to achieve educational excellence by continuously strengthening resources and enhancing facilities and technology to give students hands-on learning experiences.

Furthermore, using one's education to give back to the community is a core value at the University of La Verne. Students donate time and academic expertise to the community, helping local businesses and others in need.

The University of La Verne – An Overview

Inclusive Excellence and Mission Integration

The University of La Verne prides itself in being reflective of the diversity of Southern California. Approximately 80 percent of the University's nearly 4,700 students come from diverse backgrounds and the U.S. Department of Education has designated the University as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). With 80,000 alumni, the University fulfills a critical community function in educating students from underserved populations, many of whom are the first generation in their family to attend College.

Diversity is an integral part of the University of La Verne. It is highlighted both in the University Mission Statement and is one of its four Core Values (Diversity and Inclusivity)

The **Office of Inclusive Excellence and Mission Integration (OIEMI)** leads and supports initiatives that foster a mission-driven culture at the University of La Verne. It creates opportunities to define, assess, and advance the University's core values—Ethical Reasoning, Diversity and Inclusivity, Lifelong Learning, and Civic and Community Engagement.

OIEMI champions programs and activities that educate and inspire the campus community to value diversity of thought and lived experience. Through these efforts, the office cultivates cultural engagement, fosters a strong sense of belonging, challenges systems of privilege and oppression, and builds intercultural competence.

Guided by an equity-centered and mission-focused approach, OIEMI develops initiatives that deepen shared understanding of, commitment to, and action in support of the University's distinctive mission and its designation as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI). The office works to strengthen equity and inclusion, enhance collaborative relationships, and create an environment that affirms diverse cultures. It also advocates for policies, procedures, and opportunities that ensure equity and belonging across the University of La Verne community.



The University of La Verne – An Overview

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the ultimate governing body of the University of La Verne. As stewards of the institution, the board manages and allocates funds to fulfill the University's educational mission and ensure its future. The board meets regularly to review the financial goals of the University, set policies and their application, and confirm La Verne functions in accordance with those policies and goals.



Leadership

Risa Dickson, PhD, brings nearly three decades of experience in higher education, and 25 years of higher education administrative experience. Throughout her career, Dr. Dickson has focused on fostering collaborative governance, strategic planning, and academic excellence.

Prior to joining the University of La Verne as interim provost, Dr. Dickson held executive roles at institutions including the University of Toledo and Palo Alto University. She also served as vice president for academic planning and policy at the University of Hawai'i and spent 24 years at California

State University, San Bernardino, in leadership roles including associate provost, executive assistant to the president, and associate dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

Dr. Dickson's research and leadership expertise include shared governance, strategic academic structures, program review and prioritization, and initiatives supporting first-generation and underserved students. As an American Council on Education Fellow, her scholarly work focuses on student recruitment and retention, fundraising, and tuition-based budgeting. Additionally, she serves on the ACE Council of Fellows Professional Development Committee.

Dr. Dickson earned her Ph.D. in interpersonal and organizational communication and her master's degree in communication from the University of Southern California, and her bachelor's in communication theory from California State University, Northridge.

Budget and Finances

University of La Verne is on strong footing financially with the following metrics:

- \$200 million total institutional operating budget for FY24
- \$147 million market value of endowment for FY24
- 12.2 % endowment return for FY24
- Endowment spending is based on 4.5 % of the December 31 twelve quarter moving average of true and quasi endowment
- The FY24 operating budget includes net tuition and fees of \$112 million (including Graduate & Professional Studies) at 43 % of revenue, and room and board at 6.3 %
- \$ 28,600 endowment assets per FTE student for FY24
- 61.4 % discount rate for new students in Fall 2024

\$69.7 million in Institutional Financial Aid is awarded annually to students. 41% percent of students with need receive institutional grant aid, and 93% percent of those who applied demonstrated financial need. The average institutional grant aid exceeded \$8,742 for the Fall 2025 cohort. Merit awards range from \$8,500 - \$30,500 for 2024–25 and are awarded to select, highly qualified students in each class.

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Athletics

Approximately 30% of traditional-age undergraduates participate in intercollegiate athletics

annually. An NCAA Division III member, La Verne does not offer scholarships based on athletic ability. Its athletic program is dedicated to developing scholar-athletes who demonstrate a commitment to academic and athletic success. Intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of the overall college experience, engaging the campus community and establishing a sense of spirit and pride while promoting a healthy lifestyle and fitness of mind and body.

Additionally, the Leos engage in significant and qualitative community service, while earning academic results that meet or exceed those of the general student population. A member of the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, La Verne fields 18 teams (nine men's, nine women's).



La Verne and Southern California

At the University of La Verne, students enjoy a small town experience on the edge of one of the most vibrant metropolises in the world. The city of La Verne provides students a safe and calm oasis for concentrated learning; at the same time, the cultural activities, natural wonders, and career opportunities of Southern California lie only a short car, bus, or train ride away.

The city of La Verne (1887) and the University of La Verne (1891) grew up together, nestled in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. We're located in the heart of a quaint downtown ("D Street") where students can enjoy pleasant restaurants and cafes just steps from campus. Larger shopping centers can be found about a mile away.

Students can engage with nature easily; local trails abound in the foothills and nearby regional parks. SoCal's famous beaches are located about an hour away, and desert exploration to the east and snowball fights to the north are easily accessible with a short drive along historic Route 66. Just be sure to pack your hiking gear.

Downtown Los Angeles is about 35 miles away and students without cars can use the nearby Metrolink train line to travel to L.A., San Diego, Santa Barbara, and all points in between. Tour Downtown La Verne [here](#).

The Role of Vice President, Administration & Finance, Chief Financial Officer



Reporting directly to the President, the Vice President of Administration and Finance, Chief Financial Officer is responsible for developing and implementing financial strategy through leadership and oversight of diverse functional areas including finance and business services, facilities, Human Resources and Campus Safety. The VPAF/CFO will provide primary leadership, direction, and evaluation for all the University's financial and administrative affairs.

Direct reports to the VPAF/CFO include:

- Associate Vice President, Finance & Budget Operations
- Director of Facilities
- Director of Human Resources
- Lead Campus Safety Officer

Opportunities and Challenges

The next Vice President of Administration and Finance, Chief Financial Officer, will ensure that the University is fundamentally strong and ideally positioned for continued success. The opportunities and challenges for the next VPAF/CFO include the following:

Modernizing Financial Systems and Data Infrastructure

A major opportunity lies in overhauling the University's financial and data systems. Current tools and disconnected platforms limit informed decision-making and transparency. The new VPAF/CFO will lead a modernization effort that introduces integrated systems, reliable analytics, and standardization in financial practices. This includes enhancing and streamlining HR, budget, and reporting platforms to improve efficiency, accuracy, and accountability. Upgrading the

institution's infrastructure is essential for smarter resource allocation, compliance, and long-term stability, and as the foundation for data-informed planning across all units.

Developing a Strategic, Transparent Budget Model

The VPAF/CFO will develop and implement effective and thoughtful financial strategies to optimize resource allocation; provide accurate, reliable, and timely financial reporting and effective controls; prioritize critical infrastructure needs; and ensure sound stewardship and fiscal sustainability, while aligning with the University's mission and goals. The University's incremental budget model will transition to a zero-based budget under the next VPAF/CFO. There's strong interest in creating a more strategic, transparent budgeting model links financial statements to operational priorities. With this transition, the VPAF/CFO can help academic leaders to develop and strategically utilize their budgets, forecast multi-year needs, and empower local decision-makers while maintaining accountability. Building this new model offers an opportunity to align fiscal strategy with institutional goals, enhance collaboration between units, and replace ad hoc adjustments with a system rooted in analysis and shared understanding. Transparency and education around finances are central expectations for this transformation.

Diversifying and Growing Revenue Streams

The University's tuition dependence poses risk in an era of uneven enrollment. The VPAF/CFO will have a key opportunity to pursue revenue diversification—through auxiliary enterprises, real estate development, partnerships,

The Role of Vice President, Administration & Finance, Chief Financial Officer

and new academic or credential programs. Creative use of the University's underutilized land and facilities could generate alternative income while supporting strategic program growth. The VPAF/CFO's financial acumen will be essential in evaluating new ventures, restarting pipeline programs, and ensuring that new initiatives are sustainable. This role will require balancing innovation with prudence, helping the institution thrive beyond traditional tuition-based funding.

Enrollment, Financial Health, and Strategic Growth

Like institutions all across the country, enrollment challenges drive financial pressures, as undergraduate declines affect graduate pipelines. The VPAF/CFO will partner with enrollment management and the president to model tuition and aid scenarios, align financial planning with recruitment strategies, and invest strategically in growth areas. This work also involves confronting structural deficits and exploring cost containment while preserving student-centered values. With a clear-eyed view of financial health—operating budget, endowment performance, and debt—the VPAF/CFO can stabilize the institution's fiscal position and foster sustainable growth grounded in data and strategy.

Building, Leading, and Supporting the Finance Team

The VPAF/CFO will create a collaborative and inclusive work environment, mentor staff, and implement strategies to enhance team skills and capabilities to achieve the University's financial and strategic objectives. They will also be able to recruit and onboard new team members in the coming years, ensuring that the department evolves to meet the University's changing financial and academic needs.

Cultural Renewal and Institutional Trust

The University of La Verne community seeks a VPAF/CFO who can restore trust between administration and faculty through clear, honest, and consistent communication. The role presents an opportunity to foster a culture of transparency, collaboration, and accountability after years of uneven information flow. Faculty and staff value candor and partnership, and they want a business leader who can explain complex realities in accessible terms, engage diverse constituencies, and empower them to contribute to solutions. This cultural renewal will help rebuild confidence in leadership, align financial and academic priorities, and strengthen ULV's shared sense of purpose.



Professional Qualifications and Qualities

The VPAF/CFO will have strong interpersonal skills, a deep understanding of and commitment to the mission and values of the University of La Verne, and a thorough understanding and appreciation of the University's commitment to lifelong learning across the liberal arts and professional programs. The individual will bring significant administrative experience, a highly relational approach, outstanding communication skills, authenticity, self-confidence balanced with humility, integrity of the highest order, and a clear understanding of the challenges facing higher education today. Additionally, the ideal candidate for the role will be a financial professional with a master's degree in business, finance or related field. The VPAF will bring a demonstrated finance and budget acumen, along with the ability to communicate complex short- and long-term financial projections with subject matter expertise. They will be a strategic thinker and a dedicated, visionary leader who can foster transparent and collaborative working relationships among diverse constituents. They will contribute to the University of La Verne's efforts to create an inclusive and equitable culture and to establish a sense of belonging for all members of the University community.

Additionally, the VPAF/CFO will possess many of the following preferred qualifications and characteristics:

- Comfort leading transitions, building and rebuilding systems, hiring and developing staff, and engaging directly in complex operational details with a roll-up-your-sleeves mindset;
- A strong record of strategic leadership and thought partnership in financial management, demonstrated through



extensive experience creating and implementing complex financial modeling, as well as managing income, cash flow and debt at a complex, centralized institution or organization;

- Ethical leadership and a steady presence demonstrated through emotional intelligence, accountability, and care; maintains composure under pressure; leads with empathy, positivity, and fairness through institutional challenges and uncertainty;
- Executive-level judgment and proven experience working effectively with a governing board and senior leadership of a college, as well as all internal and external constituencies, to support transparent, accurate and compliant processes
- Exceptional communication and active listening skills, as well as the ability to distill complex financial scenarios in a clear, concise and understandable manner to all audiences;
- Strong understanding of compliance-related issues, risk analysis and state and federal regulations in higher education;
- Outstanding leadership and management skills, as well as unquestioned personal and professional ethics and integrity;
- A track record of successfully developing, managing and mentoring a team, as well as proven skills in building relationships and transparently communicating with faculty, staff, students and Board members;
- A deep respect for — and support of — students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and community members and the shared governance process in higher education;
- A high level of cultural competency and a demonstrated commitment to the values of equity and inclusion; and,
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills



Procedure for Candidacy



Compensation and Benefits

The University of La Verne offers employees competitive compensation, a comprehensive health and welfare plan and a mandatory defined contribution retirement plan – Internal Revenue Code 403(b). All eligible employees must participate in the retirement plan as a condition of employment. Eligible employees are required to make a 5% contribution to the plan. The University of La Verne will make 8% contribution to employees' retirement accounts. With respect to vesting, for employees hired on or after January 1, 2004, University contributions are fully vested upon completion of 3 years of employment. Regular university employees may also take advantage of the tuition waiver program and take classes toward a degree or for professional enrichment. Salary for the role is currently anticipated to range from \$260,000 to \$280,000, commensurate with experience.

Applications and Nominations

Evaluation of candidate materials will begin immediately and continue until a new Vice President of Administration and Finance, Chief Financial Officer is named. The ideal start date for this opportunity is January 1, 2026. Interested candidates can apply by submitting a resume and cover letter using the Talent Profile.

Nominations or inquiries can be directed to the search team below:

Jim Sirianni, Managing Director,
Mark Halligan, Senior Associate
DSG | Storbeck
LaVerneVPAFCFO@dsgco.com

To learn more about University of La Verne, visit: laverne.edu

The University is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against for employment or employees on any basis prohibited by state and federal law. Those applicants requiring reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should contact the Office of Human Resources at (909) 448-4076.