

Position and Candidate Specification President Olin College of Engineering



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The Opportunity

Established in 1997 to create a new paradigm of education, [Olin College of Engineering](#) seeks a visionary changemaker to lead this dynamic institution at a pivotal moment in its history. Olin has attracted pioneering faculty and students to create a new, transdisciplinary approach to engineering education grounded in collaboration, project-based learning, and real-world impact. The next president, in partnership with students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees, will build on this audacious mission of transforming engineering education for the good of the world.

As was written in our founding precepts, **“Olin College is intended to be different - not for the mere sake of being different - but to be an important and constant contributor to the advancement of engineering education in America and throughout the world and, through its graduates, to do good for humankind.”** In its third decade, Olin is still committed to evolving itself and transforming engineering education to confront the pressing challenges facing the world.

However, as our founding precepts anticipated, **“even a new institution can, with the passage of time, become resistant to change.”** It further states, **“The need for the College to be continually open to change and to encourage and support a culture of innovation is paramount.”** While Olin prides itself on being innovative, we recognize that a fresh look at how we operate is healthy and encouraged. We are seeking a leader who can harness the internal creativity of the college, facilitate its productive evolution, and reinvigorate innovation in areas of our institution where change has been slower to come.

As the strategic, cultural, and administrative leader of Olin, the President is responsible for leading all aspects of the college, including the academic program, its operational and financial health, and external relations including fundraising. The next President will be an exceptional listener who strives to build trust among all stakeholders, co-create when possible, and provide transparency in decision-making. With a design mindset, strong problem-solving skills, and a willingness to leave behind traditional structures and assumptions, the next President will lead Olin at a critical juncture. We look to the President to lead the creation of an innovative, impact-centered, and financially sustainable education model that serves our ambitious students and advances the field of engineering education.

ABOUT OLIN COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Olin College of Engineering is a small, 400-student, four-year undergraduate institution in Needham, Massachusetts. It was founded in 1997 with a \$460 million grant from the F.W. Olin Foundation and a mission to transform engineering education while preparing the next generation of leaders and innovators to do good in the world.

Olin College is named for Franklin W. Olin (1860–1951), an engineer, entrepreneur and professional baseball player. He founded the company known today as the Olin Corporation, a Fortune 1000 company. In 1938, Mr. Olin transferred a large part of his personal wealth to a private philanthropic foundation. In 1997, the

Foundation announced its intention to create Olin College. The Foundation's generosity enabled Olin to start from a "clean slate" in designing its academic program. The faculty worked with 30 student "partners" in the year prior to the formal opening of the college to design the curriculum.

As an innovative, dynamic college, Olin College embraces a model of teaching and learning that is project-based and centered on collaboration between faculty, staff and students. It is dedicated to the continual discovery and development of effective learning approaches and environments and collaborating with others to transform engineering education around the globe.

At Olin, it's not just about what students know, but what they do with that knowledge. The curriculum is shaped to develop skills such as communication and teamwork and to provide a depth of technical engineering expertise. Every student learns about software, electronics and mechanical systems, and has many opportunities to work with students from other majors on interdisciplinary projects.

Olin offers ABET-accredited degrees in electrical and computer engineering, mechanical engineering and engineering, a flexible degree program that lets students choose or create an area of concentration.

The Olin curriculum is based on the idea that engineering starts — and ends — with people. Students learn who they are designing for and what those people value before they begin to create. Appreciating the social context of the work and making a positive difference in the world are underlying values throughout the curriculum. Students also learn how to envision positive change and how to realize and deliver that change.

Olin is committed to the well-being of the Earth and its inhabitants, in the present and future generations, through re-building our relationship with nature, fostering a culture around community and care, recognizing intersectionality, promoting understanding of self and others, and promoting justice. We strive to demonstrate humility and understand the impact of our work on the world around us. We seek strategies that advance these goals in alignment with financial sustainability so that Olin's mission can be carried forward responsibly, supporting both current and future generations. A team of faculty, staff, students, and alumni worked to develop Olin's first Climate Action Plan in AY22/23, and that plan is now being implemented through Olin's College as a Living Lab initiative. Olin is building partnerships, faculty are reimagining courses, students are engaging in clubs and experiences, and staff are working to align our operations using sustainability, justice and ethics lenses.

Olin is part of a joint effort among Babson, Olin and Wellesley (BOW) colleges. BOW allows cross registration among students at each of the colleges, helps develop interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and problem solving, and facilitates faculty research and teaching across campuses. The vision behind the Three College Collaboration is to provide students with the creative and collaborative skills, knowledge, and ways of thinking needed to function successfully today and into the future.

In a remarkably short period of time, Olin has gained national and international recognition:

- #2 Undergraduate Engineering Program in the country, U.S. News & World Report's 2025 Best Colleges
- #1 Highest-Earning Grads, College Scorecard-U.S. Department of Education
- #2 Best Classroom Experience, Princeton Review, 2024 list of Best Value Colleges
- 2023-24 Top Fulbright Producer, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Olin has over a decade of experience partnering with industry – from startups to Fortune 500 companies – on developing innovative solutions, including energy harvesting from water flow; improving CT scanner alignment during installation; and creating generative AI-powered learning systems.

The college’s nearly 1,800 graduates are already making a name for themselves as entrepreneurs, counting BigBelly, Indico, Skydio, Twelve, Lever and Righthand Robotics among its alumni-founded companies. Other graduates have gone on to work for well-established companies such as Google, Ford, Salesforce, Amazon Robotics and SpaceX; many others attend top graduate schools, including Stanford, Princeton, MIT, Harvard and Cornell. Olin alumni stay deeply connected through mentorship, networking events, and collaborations, enriching the college’s vibrant community.

KEY PRIORITIES

- **Community Building and Cultural Immersion:** Through active engagement in campus life, the President will work to strengthen trust across the campus community, fostering an environment that encourages freedom of inquiry, respectful dialogue, collaboration, and co-creation in shaping and advancing the academic mission. Olin is a small, tightly knit, and engaged community with fewer than 500 total students, faculty and staff. Through immersion in this community, the President will acquire firsthand knowledge of Olin’s strengths and opportunities for change.
- **Financial and Operational Sustainability:** As a young college in a changing world, Olin must continue to evolve. The President will ensure the financial and operational sustainability of the college by building on its financial model and thoughtfully adapting its operational strategies to align with emerging challenges and opportunities. A skilled facilitator and experienced decision-maker, the President will engage the entire community in strategic discussions, soliciting diverse input, leveraging existing strengths, challenging assumptions, and making tough decisions. The President will also be an inspiring advocate for Olin in global conversations, building our capacity for partnerships and major fundraising.
- **Bold, Strategic Leadership:** Olin is committed to being a contributor to the advancement of engineering education for the good of the world. We seek a President who, in partnership with our engaged students, staff, and faculty, can harness the creative energy of the college to support continued curricular innovation, and to challenge and advance our definition of what “being different” means. The President will need to minimize bureaucracy and institutional inertia in all forms, embracing appropriate risks in pursuit of opportunities that will further distinguish the school and support its bold ambitions.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Olin’s next president will be a visionary, a problem solver, a design thinker, and a passionate educator. With integrity and emotional intelligence, the President will possess expansive leadership skills, a collaborative mindset, and the creativity, empathy, curiosity, and energy to lead a vibrant and engaged community. This individual will bring strong executive leadership experience to steward the college’s assets, a commitment to nurturing community, the ability to communicate with passion and clarity, and the courage to take on challenging conversations and make difficult decisions. Energized by the opportunity to envision and build the next iteration of this institution, the President will consider the impact of our actions on both people and the planet, now and in the future. They will strive to do good while minimizing harm, embracing the energy Oliners have for sustainability, fairness, and making a positive impact, and working collaboratively to harness that collective energy.

As such, the Search Committee seeks an individual with the following attributes:

- Demonstrated commitment to higher education with a proven ability to envision advancements in higher education models

- Experience driving innovation to foster our innate creativity
- Demonstrated experience managing change within organizations
- Ability to engage intellectually with faculty, gain their confidence through a shared commitment to academic innovation, and co-create new curricular directions
- Track record of building strong administrative teams which are vital to the success of the academic mission and the effective delivery of academic programming
- Commitment to continuous professional growth to empower educators and staff
- Demonstrated commitment to social justice, equity, access, belonging, diversity and inclusion.
- Ability to attract philanthropic support for the college's ambitions; forge the relationships and have the story-telling skills needed to inspire donors
- Ability to lead engineering conversations on the national and international stage with inspired approaches and a willingness to learn and evolve
- Ability to communicate clearly, listen deeply, and engage effectively with a wide range of constituencies

THE SEARCH PROCESS

Olin College has retained Spencer Stuart to support the search process and has selected a eight-member Search Committee made up of trustees, faculty, staff, and a student who will make a recommendation to the full Board of Trustees at the conclusion of their work. Nominations, applications, and inquiries can be directed in confidence to: OlinPresident@spencerstuart.com.

The Olin College of Engineering is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

For additional information about Olin College, please visit www.olin.edu.