

# PennWest UNIVERSITY



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*Inviting Applications and Nominations for*

## Controller



**MYERSMcRAE**  
EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND CONSULTING





**Pennsylvania Western University**, with campuses in California, Clarion, and Edinboro, seeks a strategic and experienced professional and proven leader to serve as **Controller in the Division of Finance and Administration**. This is an outstanding opportunity for an experienced and accomplished financial officer with significant potential to influence, shape, and advance the mission of the university.

- ▶ Through innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments, Pennsylvania Western University provides accessible education that cultivates career-ready, life-long learners and leaders, who enrich and engage each other, their communities, the region, and beyond.
- ▶ PennWest is a university centered on the student experience, where decisionmakers consider students first. Deeply rooted in service to the people and communities of western Pennsylvania, our community of educators is committed to providing exemplary, career-relevant higher education for learners at all stages of life while supporting the region's economic and workforce needs.



## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

**Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest) is Western Pennsylvania's second-largest university. With a 175-year tradition of academic excellence combined with 21st-century career preparation, PennWest embodies the best of the past and the promise of the future.** Capitalizing on the strengths of three unique campuses—California, Clarion, and Edinboro and its Global Online programs—with one shared vision, PennWest is a community united by its collective vision of making an impact through education. Its colleges and departments offer a range of programs that empower students to explore their passions, develop their skills, and create meaningful careers. With the integration of California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities, PennWest has expanded its resources, diversified its programs, and strengthened its support network to ensure that students succeed.

PennWest offers dozens of nationally ranked and recognized programs, and more than 100 majors, minors, and certificate pathways. With in-demand programs, expert faculty, and hands-on learning opportunities, PennWest provides the tools needed to earn a degree or advance one's career. Edinboro's award-winning animation program ranks among the

best in the U.S., named by Animation Career Review as 19th of the Top 25 Animation Schools and Colleges on the East Coast list for 2024. PennWest was named by the Best Colleges of U.S. News and World Report #49 in Top Public Schools, #135 of Regional Universities North, and #124 in Top Performers on Social Mobility.

Formed in 2022 through the integration of California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities—each with deep roots in Pennsylvania's higher education landscape—PennWest serves more than 10,000 students across its three campuses and online. The university's student body reflects a diverse community, representing 66 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, 48 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and 57 countries around the globe.

Its reach spans from Lake Erie to the West Virginia border, with an annual economic impact exceeding \$750 million. PennWest is a regional leader in providing career-relevant academic programs within a strong liberal arts foundation. It offers over 90 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs across three academic colleges, supported by expert faculty and dedicated staff.

PennWest students are diverse and driven: 34% are first-generation, 37% are Pell-eligible, and 30% pursue fully online programs. Whether on campus or online, students benefit from flexible learning options, student-centered support services, and a commitment to academic quality— every course is taught by credentialed faculty (17:1 faculty to student ratio), never by graduate assistants. Almost 96% of PennWest graduates are employed or pursuing further education within six months of graduation.

The university is proud of its vibrant campus life, NCAA Division II athletics, and its 204,000-strong alumni network. Recent investments in student success, campus facilities, and emerging technologies, including a new center for artificial intelligence—highlight its commitment to innovation and impact.

## **PennWest Global Online**

PennWest Global Online delivers accessible, high-quality education through a dynamic platform that unites the strengths of its California, Clarion, and Edinboro campuses. With 20+ years of experience in online learning, PennWest offers flexible, affordable programs led by dedicated faculty who provide personalized support and engaging instruction. Serving a global community of learners, its interactive, tech-enabled environment prepares students for success in today's evolving workforce.

## **PennWest California**

Home to the California Vulcans, PennWest California is situated along the scenic Monongahela River, less than an hour from Pittsburgh. With more than 100 student clubs and organizations, 18 NCAA Division II athletic teams, and women's flag football, the campus offers students countless opportunities to get involved, grow, and thrive.

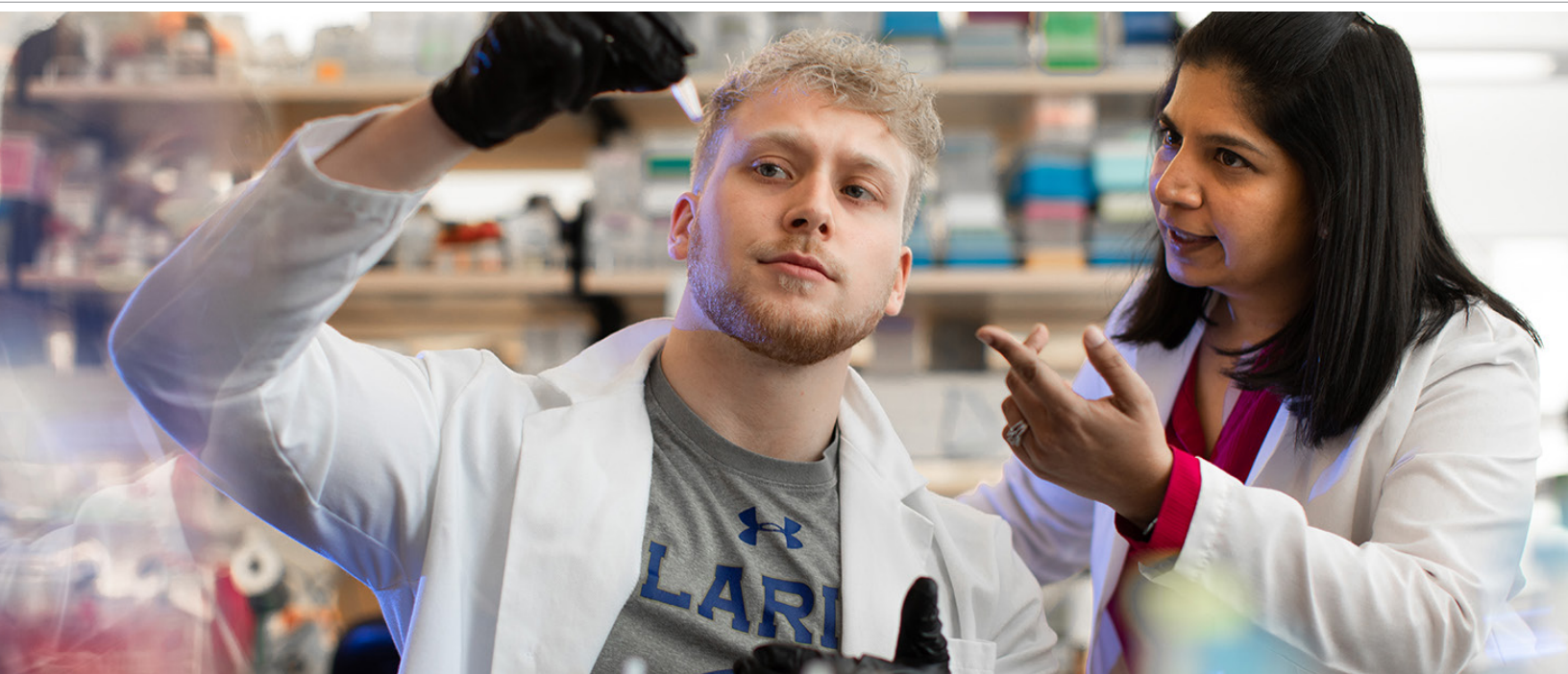
## **PennWest Clarion**

Home to the Clarion Golden Eagles, PennWest Clarion is nestled in a charming town amid the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania. Students enjoy access to more than 150 student organizations, 14 NCAA Division II varsity sports, Division I men's wrestling, and abundant outdoor recreation along the Clarion River and in nearby Cook Forest State Park.

## **PennWest Edinboro**

Set on a picturesque 250-acre campus with a lake and natural surroundings, PennWest Edinboro is home to the Fighting Scots and located just 20 miles from Erie. A hub for artists, athletes, and outdoor enthusiasts, the campus offers more than 140 clubs and organizations, 18 NCAA Division II teams, Division I men's wrestling, and nationally recognized Wheelchair Basketball.

***All three campuses and its online division comprise Pennsylvania Western University.***







# VISION AND VALUES

**Pennsylvania Western University empowers students to achieve meaningful goals through a broad array of nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate programs, career-focused learning, and support systems that foster lifelong success.**

PennWest's innovative three-campus model was designed to expand opportunities for students while positioning the university for a strong and sustainable future. We have a steadfast dedication to operational efficiency and utilize technology not only as a teaching tool, but also to align processes and procedures as we deliver services to students, faculty, and staff.

As a state-owned university, PennWest embraces its role as the higher education option of choice for a population that includes many rural, urban, low-income, and first-generation students, including those who require substantial levels of financial, academic, and/or personal support to thrive in a university setting. We provide a strong scaffold of support for our students, empowering them to be successful in their studies and their lives.

## Our Values

**Learning: We are a community of educators who provide a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.**

PennWest is devoted to helping our students reach their goals. We encourage the personal, intellectual, and professional development of our students

by supporting their academic needs; recruiting, mentoring, and retaining high-quality faculty and staff; cultivating a widespread culture of assessment; and providing a cohesive support system that utilizes a full range of stakeholders (students and families, faculty, staff, and administrators) to deliver student success.

**Growth: We are student ready, guiding our students towards personal, financial, and academic success.**

PennWest is invested in the personal and social development of our students. We work to create a welcoming, diverse campus culture that respects and celebrates a sense of belonging. Across our three campuses, we identify and implement best practices that support the student experience; encourage participation in co-curricular activities and leadership opportunities; and utilize a holistic well-being model that seeks student input and provides the support programs, services, and resources students need.

**Inclusion: We advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide an equitable, supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.**

PennWest defines diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that encompasses all our stakeholders and places equity as a key motivator for success. DEI principles are a hallmark of our university and are embedded throughout our strategies and initiatives.



**Collaboration: We engage in innovative partnerships, programs, and opportunities to address the needs of our regional communities and the commonwealth.**

PennWest is focused on understanding western Pennsylvania's unique strengths and needs, and helping to transform not only our students, but our communities as well. We work to align our programs and partnerships to advance existing regional and commonwealth plans for economic, workforce, and community development. We seek to grow innovation, entrepreneurship, and small businesses on our campuses and in our region, and to build the university's reputation through mutually beneficial engagement with our communities and their leaders.

**Culture: We share a sense of purpose that unites the PennWest community at large and provides opportunities to learn, work, and thrive.**

PennWest is a people-first organization that promotes lifelong learning. Within a culture built on collaboration and a commitment to personal growth, we aim to ensure the wellbeing of our workforce and celebrate its accomplishments. We invest in the professional and leadership growth of our faculty and staff, recognize the accomplishments of our students and employees, and actively work to foster a culture of collaboration across our three campuses.

Pennsylvania Western University empowers students to build meaningful lives through a broad array of nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate programs, career-focused learning, and an unwavering focus on student success. A regional comprehensive university, PennWest provides accessible, high value higher education on its three premier residential campuses in western Pennsylvania and its virtual campus.







# THE OPPORTUNITY

**PennWest University is seeking a strategic and experienced Controller to lead our financial operations. This key leadership position provides direct supervisory oversight to the following university-based departments: Accounting, Accounts Payable, Grant Accounting, and Student Accounts ensuring the accuracy, integrity, and compliance of the University's financial systems and reporting and is responsible for oversight of the revenue functions of the University.**

The primary person responsible for the accuracy, timeliness, and reporting of daily activities for the University, the Controller ensures compliance with internal controls and compliance with Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania policies and procedures. The Controller manages the relationship with the external auditors, including planning, preparing, reviewing, and complying with audit requests for the annual financial audit and the single audit; manages external reporting for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA), NCAA Financial Reporting System, Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP), Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey, the federal Uniform Grants Guidance audit, state-mandated audits, and any other customary or special audits that may be required. Ensures compliance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Pennsylvania Department of Revenue regulations relating to tax matters. Additionally, the Controller invoices/draws funds for federal and state grants, direct loans, and work study, and serves as the system administrator for banking, endowment,

U.S. Department of Education G5, System for Award Management (SAM), and other cash and grant related systems/portals. Other key responsibilities include managing master data for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) for funds and cost centers as well as student information system (SIS) billing, managing the University's cash position, and assisting the budget office with reconciling budget to actual variances. This position also actively participates in the State System's controller group meetings and works closely with the University Affiliates.

The Controller plays a critical role in mentoring and developing staff, while fostering a collaborative and high-performing team environment. This position provides strategic leadership to ensure the continued growth and professional development of the accounting, accounts payable, and student accounts teams, aligning staff goals with departmental and institutional priorities. The Controller also contributes to long-term planning and decision-making within the Finance Division, helping to shape and lead initiatives that strengthen financial stewardship and operational excellence across the University. The Controller will lead and participate in campus-wide initiatives that support the development and implementation of effective and efficient business processes with a focus on technology efficiencies.

This position reports to the Vice President of Finance and Administration and is an on-campus, 12-month position. The Controller can be on any of the three campuses. The preferred start date is January 2026. Travel will be required as needed from the Controller's "home" PennWest campus to the other PennWest campuses.



## Responsibilities

- Responsible for developing policies, procedures and systems that foster the responsible stewardship of university resources, sound accounting practices, strong internal controls, and efficient user-friendly business practices. Ensures compliance with federal, state, and institutional regulations.
- Institute/abide by internal controls, ensuring conformance with GAAP, GASB, FASB, IRS, PASSHE BOG policies and procedure/standards and PennWest University policies, monitoring of general ledger accounts, fund balances, and banking activities, stewardship of University resources, compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations, and accuracy in reporting.
- Manages the relationship with the external auditors, including planning, preparing, reviewing, and complying with audit requests for the annual financial audit and the single audit.
- Maintain an up-to-date chart of accounts and ensure campus-wide reporting availability.
- Ensures the efficient and effective use of all financial/ERP systems to support evolving accounting and reporting needs.
- Lead and participate in campus-wide initiatives that support the development and implementation of effective and efficient business processes.
- Support the Regional Procurement Office in procurement and direct pay functions.
- Manage master data for ERP (funds and cost centers) and SIS billing.
- Oversight of Fixed Assets and the financial reporting for all Capital Projects.
- Financial Analysis and Reporting for all Privatized Student and Capital Leased Housing in collaboration with Auxiliary Services leadership.
- Understanding of financial aid regulations and processes.
- Align departmental goals with institutional priorities.
- Actively engage in State System Controller group meetings.
- Supports procurement activities in collaboration with the Regional Procurement Office.
- Collaborate with internal and external partners.
- Develop departmental training as needed.
- Review and develop business processes to conform to best practices for improved effectiveness and efficiency.





## Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, or a related field.
- Minimum of ten (10) years of increasingly responsible, relevant professional experience and management in Accounting/Finance.
- Extensive knowledge of financial and accounting principles and practices, financial reporting, and tax regulations.
- Excellent technology skills that include proficiency with Microsoft Office with a heavy emphasis on Microsoft Excel and pivot tables, and other complex accounting systems.
- Proven leadership experience in a complex financial environment, preferably in higher education.
- Strong analytical, organizational, and interpersonal skills.
- Experience with external audits and regulatory compliance.
- Effective leader and manager with demonstrated ability to mentor subordinates.

- Ability to manage multiple priorities and lead cross-functional initiatives.
- Exceptional communication skills.

## Preferred Qualifications

- Master's degree in a business program or a CPA is also preferred.
- Experience in Governmental Accounting and the SAP Financial Accounting system.
- Fund Accounting experience in a government or not-for-profit entity.
- Supervisory experience and accounting experience in higher education, governmental or not-for-profit environment.
- Also preferred is public accounting assurance/audit experience, experience in a public (GASB) higher education system with a central office, and knowledge of business office operations and integrations with an ERP, SIS, identification card, food service, housing, point of sale, and banking systems.







## WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

At PennWest University, students (and the Controller) have the opportunity to choose from three distinct campuses, each nestled in a picturesque, vibrant town. Whether one prefers a serene lakeside community or a campus along a sprawling river bend, PennWest offers an amazing backdrop. Each campus is located near Pittsburgh or Erie and the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania.

Long recognized as a powerhouse of American industry, Western Pennsylvania is a large geophysical and socio-economic entity. It encompasses that portion of the state to the west of the Appalachian divide and included within the Mississippi drainage system of rivers. Pittsburgh is the region's principal city, with a metropolitan area population of about 2.4 million

people and serves as its economic and cultural center. The three towns of California, Clarion, and Edinboro are primarily known for producing natural gas, oil, lumber, and coal.

While each district is comprised of exceptional public schools, each one also has excellent private schools. Each of the three towns has medical centers, hospitals, and many private physicians as well.

Each of the California, Clarion, and Edinboro boroughs has shops and restaurants that are easily accessible along with various scenic attractions, nature areas, festivals, entertainment, sports, and clubs. Each town is about two hours from the other.



## Application & Nomination Process

*Confidential inquiries are welcomed, and nominations are invited.*



**MYERSMCRAE**  
EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND CONSULTING  
(478) 330-6222 [MyersMcRae.com](http://MyersMcRae.com)

### Applications

**All application packets must include the following:**

- 1) A letter of application that includes the candidate's (a) interest in and qualifications for the position, (b) leadership philosophy, and (c) vision for PennWest's Controller position
- 2) Current curriculum vitae
- 3) At least four references with full contact information including e-mail (*References will not be contacted without consent from applicant.*)

**Submit application materials online**, preferably as PDFs. Additional information is requested with the submission of materials. **Applications will be reviewed, and the position will remain open until filled.**

[APPLY HERE](#)

### Nominations

Submit nominations with complete contact and e-mail information for the individual being nominated.

[NOMINATE HERE](#)

### Consultant

PennWest has retained **Myers McRae Executive Search and Consulting** to assist the Search Committee in its identification and review of Controller candidates. **Jennifer Barfield**, Executive Vice President of Myers McRae Executive Search and Consulting, is the lead consultant for this search. **Request a conversation regarding this search at [JenniferBarfield@myersmcr.com](mailto:JenniferBarfield@myersmcr.com).**



*PennWest is committed to equal employment and equal educational opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender, gender identity, race or color, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, age, mental or physical disability, religion or creed, genetic information, affectional or sexual orientation, veteran status, or other classifications that are protected under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other pertinent state and federal laws and regulations.*