

Alissa Mahar

Finalist – Vice President of Business and Strategy

Alissa Mahar is an accomplished executive with more than 15 years of progressive leadership experience in higher education and public sector finance, strategy, and operations. Currently serving as Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Business and Finance at Seattle Pacific University, Alissa leads a broad enterprise portfolio encompassing finance, human resources, IT, facilities, capital development, real estate strategy, safety and security, auxiliary operations, legal affairs, and institutional investments.

She has overseen operating budgets in excess of \$400 million, and capital projects totaling over \$185 million. Her strategic financial leadership has supported institutions through transformative change, aligning budget and operations with mission-critical outcomes and long-term sustainability. At Seattle Pacific, Alissa led the development of a five-year financial forecast, \$90 million real estate strategy, and a comprehensive capital improvement plan, while securing efficiency gains.

Alissa's prior roles include CFO at the University of Washington Information Technology, where she managed a \$165 million budget across a matrixed organization, and CFO and Vice President for Finance and Operations at Clackamas Community College, where she guided a \$300 million budget and implemented a successful \$95 million capital bond program.

Her leadership is marked by a deep commitment to transparency, inclusive governance, and results-oriented innovation. She has served as a strategic advisor to boards of trustees, collaborated across academic and administrative units, built successful external partnerships, and cultivated high-performing teams through mentorship, empowerment, and organizational development. A seasoned negotiator and consensus builder, Alissa has also led collective bargaining processes and DEI initiatives across multiple institutions.

Alissa holds an MBA and BA in Business Administration from Portland State University and has earned certifications in Lean Six Sigma, Project Management (PMP), Business Relationship Management, and Government Financial Management. She has served on numerous boards and committees, including as Vice Chair of the Seattle Pacific Foundation, a member of the University of Washington's Activity-Based Budgeting Steering Committee, and executive positions at two economic development organizations.

Her leadership philosophy is grounded in trust, clarity, and collaboration—with a focus on fostering a culture of respect, continuous improvement, innovation, and student-centered strategic growth.