



Executive Director, E.A. Fernandez IDEA Factory
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

Innovate, Design, and Engineer for America (IDEA)

THE SEARCH

The University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) seeks an innovative, entrepreneurial, and student-focused leader to serve as the inaugural Executive Director (ED) for the newly completed [E.A. Fernandez IDEA Factory](#). The ED will play a strategic leadership role at one of the country's most outstanding public research and educational institutions, whose innovation and entrepreneurship (I&E) ecosystem has ranked in the top 10 nationally year upon year. This is a singular opportunity to organize, inspire, and lead some of the nation's most talented students to achieve globally impactful innovations aimed at the [grand challenges](#) facing the world now and in the future, aligning with the goals of the [UMD Strategic Plan](#) while leveraging the resources of an R1, AAU, flagship land-grant institution in the heart of the National Capital Region (NCR).

The strategic aim of the IDEA Factory is to serve as a force multiplier for solving the most intractable problems. The Factory will promote the values, skills, and aspirations at the core of what it means to be a problem solver: to foster collaboration and harness creativity; to engage in interdisciplinary design, innovation, and entrepreneurial activities; to create and support experiences that shape the careers of future leaders; and to empower students and faculty to generate knowledge and solutions to society's grand challenges and translate them to improve the quality of life for all humankind. The ED will coalesce these activities at the new 60,000 GSF E.A. Fernandez IDEA Factory, a state-of-the-art building just opened at the A. James Clark School of Engineering that also houses cutting-edge lab space for the UMD [Quantum Technology Center](#) (QTC), the [Maryland Robotics Center](#), and the [Alfred Gessow Rotorcraft Center](#). The entire first floor of the IDEA Factory is dedicated to student innovation, entrepreneurialism and competition and is called the Tom & Susan Scholl Center for Student Innovation. The Scholl Center includes the ALEx Garage—a student co-working, design, and fabrication space; a rapid prototyping lab; a pop-up innovation lab; and the [Startup Shell](#), an accelerator operated by undergraduate students.

Candidates will have a personal record of success in innovative and entrepreneurial activities, connectivity with and understanding of the ways in which commercial and governmental institutions support these activities, a dedication to fostering student innovation through

experiential learning, and a passion for solving societal problems. They will exhibit a proven ability to work collaboratively and effectively with faculty, administrators, and students while developing and maintaining strong external relationships and partnerships, including with the external venture community. The ED will demonstrate tested leadership and delegation skills, a record of administrative experience and diplomacy in a highly matrixed environment, and strong interpersonal skills. The successful candidate will be a convener, motivator, and relationship builder, who will leverage the transformative potential of the University of Maryland's top-ranked research enterprise and the University's external assets, positioning the E.A. Fernandez IDEA Factory for bold and meaningful national and global impact across disciplines.

The University of Maryland has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist a university search committee in this recruitment. All applications, inquiries, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

The University of Maryland, College Park, was established in 1856 as the Maryland Agriculture College and became the state's original land-grant university in 1864. It shares the land-grant designation with the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, the 1890's Land Grant Institution of the state of Maryland. Today, UMD ranks number 22 among public institutions by *U.S. News and World Report* for best colleges nationwide. Through its Extension, it is present in all of the state's 23 counties and the city of Baltimore. As a driver of research and innovation, UMD is indispensable to the intellectual and economic vitality of the state and maintains a significant presence in the state capital of Annapolis. It is the only research institution of its scope and scale in the NCR, proximate to major federal funding agencies, federally-funded research and development centers (FFRDCs), and partners like the U.S. Army Research Lab, the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and many others.

UMD's dedication to service is fundamental to its relations throughout the state and the nation. The University's mission is to educate future leaders to be engaged and thoughtful citizens in a complex, vibrant, and democratic society. It anticipates and prepares them for opportunities that will enrich their lives and enhance the economic, social, and cultural vitality of the state and the nation. As a public flagship campus, the University is committed to providing the highest quality educational opportunities that are affordable to all students regardless of family income. The University regards the diversity of its faculty, staff, and students as among its greatest strengths and as an essential component of its excellence. Providing equal educational opportunity, hiring and retaining a diverse faculty and staff of exceptional achievement, and recruiting and graduating talented students from traditionally underrepresented groups are institutional priorities.

College Park and the National Capital Region

For over 150 years, College Park has been a center of education, experimentation, and exploration. It is an intellectual and economic nexus, connected to the Washington, D.C. Metro area through public transportation (Washington Metro Area Transit Authority Green, Purple, and Yellow Lines) and major traffic routes (Route 1, I-295, and the I-495 Capital Beltway). Already easily accessible to Baltimore and Washington, D.C., the campus also enjoys easy access to institutions across the metropolitan area including Bethesda, MD (home of the NIH), Crystal City, VA (home of Amazon's HQ2), and three major airports: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), Dulles Airport (IAD), and the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI). UMD sits within one of the most dynamic economic regions in the nation and benefits from proximity to numerous multinational corporations and industry clusters; an unmatched array of federal departments, agencies, and research centers; embassies, think tanks, and nonprofit organizations; and the national legislative, executive, and judicial centers of power. In addition, the University is proximate to Baltimore, the state capital of Annapolis, the Chesapeake Bay, and the I-270 biotechnology corridor. The Universities at Shady Grove (USG) in nearby Montgomery County houses UMD's Institute for Bioscience and Biotechnology Research (IBBR), which brings together UMD bioscience and biomedical engineering experts with innovators from industry and federal agencies to carry out groundbreaking translational research. Shady Grove also forms an extension of multiple USM campuses, including UMD, and offers more than 80 undergraduate and graduate degree programs on one convenient campus.

The City of College Park sits in the racially and socioeconomically diverse Prince George's County. UMD's overall enrollment, the population of the county, and the population of the state of Maryland are all majority-minority, and Maryland is now the most diverse state on the East Coast according to the 2020 Census. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are critical aspects of UMD's vital relationship with the city, the county, and the state. The University has invested heavily over the years in community engagement, economic development initiatives, and capital projects that have brought new partnerships, businesses, and services to the region, and College Park has experienced a major renaissance. Through its research, capital investment projects, community outreach, and employment opportunities, the University has directly and positively impacted Maryland's citizenry and continues to be committed to deeply embedding the University in the community and working with partners to address racial disparities, development priorities, and environmental concerns.

For more information about the University of Maryland, please see www.umd.edu.

RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Though physically located in the A. James Clark School of Engineering—a top 10 public engineering enterprise—the IDEA Factory aims at University-wide engagement and global impact. The existing I&E infrastructure at UMD is considerable and widespread, catalyzing innovation through experiential learning opportunities across academic disciplines; fostering

partnerships among students, faculty, and staff; and translating innovation to impact through the engagement of diverse partners throughout the NCR, both public and private.

UMD's renowned I&E Ecosystem includes the following units and activities:

- [Mtech](#) (Maryland Technology Enterprise Institute); A unit of the A. James Clark School of Engineering, Mtech's programs arm students with the knowledge of how to successfully launch companies. They guide aspiring and existing entrepreneurs through the entire lifecycle of launching and maintaining technology-based ventures, and they support technology product development partnerships in both fledgling and mature ventures.
- [Academy for Innovation & Entrepreneurship](#); Operating through the Office of the Provost, the Academy for Innovation and Entrepreneurship embeds creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial mindset into the core curriculum for all students of all majors through design thinking, lean startup, and team-based experiential learning.
- [Mokhtarzada Hatchery](#); The Mokhtarzada Hatchery was launched in 2021 to help University of Maryland students develop and launch software startups. Created by Terps for Terps, the Hatchery provides dedicated working space and mentors to help student entrepreneurs get their fearless ideas and startups into the best shape possible.
- [Startup UMD](#); An innovation and entrepreneurship hub that serves as an initial touch point for anyone interested in engaging with the University's I&E ecosystem. Located in the Diamondback Garage in the [Discovery District](#).
- [Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship](#); For over 30 years the Dingman Center has created an inclusive environment where students are educated, empowered, and equipped with the business skills needed to be an entrepreneur, and provided with the resources necessary to make their business ideas a reality. Additionally, the Dingman Center offers several for-credit course opportunities via its connection within the Robert H. Smith School of Business.
- [Do Good Institute](#); The first Institute of its kind in the nation, the Do Good Institute provides opportunities for University of Maryland students that equip them for a lifelong commitment to social impact through education, research, connection to resources, and initiatives such as the Do Good Accelerator and the Do Good Challenge.
- [UM Ventures](#); UM Ventures is a joint initiative of the [MPowering the State Program](#), bringing together the University of Maryland, Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park and their combined billion dollars of annual research to commercialize discoveries and create economic impact by engaging partners in industry and social ventures.
- [Quantum Startup Foundry](#); The Quantum Startup Foundry (QSF) offers critical physical and virtual resources to support entrepreneurs and startups in accelerating quantum

technologies' time to market. QSF brings entrepreneurs together with industry and government customers, investors, technical mentors, leading-edge research and IP, and quantum-specific infrastructure.

- [NSF I-Corps Hub: Mid-Atlantic Region](#); The National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps (I-Corps) program is a series of inclusive, experiential, data-driven workshops that help identify where and how promising ideas can make the most significant economic and societal impact. UMD is the lead institution of the NSF I-Corps Hub: Mid-Atlantic Region.
- [Startup Shell](#); Startup Shell is a 100% student-led accelerator that has created 180+ innovative, collaborative ventures, many of which address societal issues. Startup Shell was designed for students and by students and is open 24/7 for Shellers to work, play, and have fun together.

For more information on the University of Maryland's I&E Ecosystem, please visit www.innovate.umd.edu.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, E.A. FERNANDEZ IDEA FACTORY

The ED will serve as a catalyst for student-centric entrepreneurialism and disruptive innovation at UMD. Reporting both to the Director of Mtech, Dr. William Bentley, and with a dotted line to the President of the University, Dr. Darryll J. Pines, the Executive Director will oversee considerable resources—both human and material—but will also have a mandate and an imperative to connect across the University, ideate collectively with I&E leaders, articulate a vision for student engagement around expansive ideas, and connect these ideas and activities with the outside world at scale.

The University of Maryland, College Park has articulated five overarching objectives for the IDEA Factory:

1. *Generate energy and excitement around engaging with the IDEA Factory throughout the University of Maryland ecosystem and greater Beltway region;*
2. *Create and inspire truly disruptive ideas across academic disciplines;*
3. *Inspire individuals to work on [the grand challenges](#) of our time;*
4. *Inspire multidisciplinary teams of students to work on revolutionary projects and/or engage in national and international competitions that have the potential for great impact;*
5. *Inspire groups or teams of students, faculty, and/or staff to engage in "XPrize"-level endeavors.*

In order to accomplish these objectives, the ED will create, launch, and oversee IDEA Factory programs and activities that complement and leverage the University's rich I&E ecosystem in concert with their own experience in innovation management, early-stage investments, startup formation, public outreach, and business development.

The IDEA Factory Executive Director will oversee the ALEx Garage and other key innovation activities in the Scholl Center for Student Innovation. The Executive Director will have a number of administrative direct reports and will work closely with the Dean of the A. James Clark School of Engineering, Dr. Samuel Graham, Jr., on the shared spaces with a facilities coordinator provided by the Clark School. Significant funding for generative ventures like student startup competitions, conferences, travel, and other supporting activities will issue from the Office of the President, Mtech, and other reinforcing units across UMD.

OPPORTUNITIES

Catalyze cross-disciplinary student entrepreneurship and innovation aimed at grand challenge-level problems

Aligning with the goals of the [UMD Strategic Plan](#) to orient the University—philosophically, structurally, and monetarily—towards enduring and emerging societal challenges such as climate change, social injustice, global health, education disparities, poverty, and threats to democracy, the Executive Director will play the critical role in coalescing cross-disciplinary efforts that lead to external engagement and impact. Together with the broader I&E Ecosystem at the University, they will create new, team- and cohort-based efforts and initiatives in service to these lofty goals while maintaining a deep commitment to the student experience from start to finish. The Executive Director will make big bets on disruptive innovations addressed by student teams and cohorts drawn to the creative nexus of the IDEA Factory and will broadcast the successes of these students widely and tirelessly.

Leverage and reinforce the existing I&E Ecosystem at UMD and in the State of Maryland and the NCR

The ED will create programming that maximally complements and leverages UMD's existing I&E Ecosystem to take advantage of new opportunities, fill gaps, and serve as connective tissue across the University, physically and philosophically. With the help of a dedicated team, including an administrative coordinator and an associate director, the IDEA Factory will deliver impact at scale and that reaches beyond the boundaries of the University. At the heart of one of the nation's true geographic engines of socioeconomic transformation and success, UMD plays a critical role in the vitality of the national capital region and its many private and public constituencies; this connectivity will feed into the IDEA Factory's scope of activity, and a perceptive Executive Director will recognize and engage willing external partners across sectors in bringing forward and translating great ideas and will connect with on-the-ground established and emerging businesses and with other major drivers of economic activity in the public and private spheres.

Broadcast the IDEA Factory's emerging capabilities, aims, and successes across and beyond the University of Maryland

The Executive Director will champion the IDEA Factory before a broad external audience and will bring back further opportunities and connectivity for the benefit of engaged students. As bold, student-led efforts emerge, the ED will work diligently to identify external sponsors to interface

with students and help to bring their efforts from ideation to fruition. Internally, the ED will work constantly to engage partners across the University without regard to departmental boundaries or siloes, with the imprimatur of the Office of the President and a mandate to recruit expertise and energy to the generative flux of the IDEA Factory.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

No single candidate will possess in full every useful experience, but the search committee seeks a person with the following qualifications:

- A bachelor's degree is required, and advanced degree is preferred;
- At least 10 years experience in innovation and entrepreneurship related activities required;
- An entrepreneurial ethos; intellectual curiosity; a passion for creating and realizing a vision of innovation from concept to execution;
- Familiarity with—or ability to navigate—higher education systems and structures; the gravitas and acumen to earn the respect of faculty members;
- Demonstrated experience in engaging faculty and students in the commercialization process;
- Experience acting as a founder of an enterprise, launching new ideas, or working in a startup organization;
- Proven history and success in evaluating and identifying commercialization and investment opportunities;
- Proficient relationship building skills; demonstrable success in forging meaningful connections and partnerships with varied stakeholders;
- Ability to embrace a range of research foci, as well as varying perspectives on the role of innovation in a higher education setting;
- Exceptional verbal, written, and presentation communications skills;
- A demonstrable commitment to, and track record of accomplishment around, equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as sensitivity and broad experience with diverse stakeholders;
- A deep, demonstrated understanding of—and commitment to—the values and the mission of public higher education, entrepreneurship, and contributing to the common good of humanity;
- A devotion to the highest ethical standards, with personal and professional integrity above reproach;
- Demonstrated capability in inspiring and persuading diverse stakeholders to buy into the articulated vision and become partners in driving the enterprise forward.

TO APPLY:

Review of candidates will begin immediately and continue until an appointment is made. All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including—as separate documents—a cover letter, resume, and list of references) should be directed in confidence to:

Gale Merseth, Partner
Vijay Saraswat, Partner
Debbie Scheibler, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller
www.imsearch.com/8531

Electronic Applications are strongly encouraged.

The University of Maryland, College Park, an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action; all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment. The University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, protected veteran status, age, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, creed, marital status, political affiliation, personal appearance, or on the basis of rights secured by the First Amendment, in all aspects of employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions.