



Search for the Senior Director of New Ventures

Texas A&M Innovation
College Station, Texas

THE SEARCH

Texas A&M Innovation invites applications and nominations for the inaugural role of Senior Director of New Ventures. This position will be instrumental in driving innovation across The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS or System) by accelerating the launch of new institutional start-ups and strategic ventures based on TAMUS intellectual property and research, and broadly growing the entrepreneurial culture, brand, and results of Texas A&M.

Texas A&M Innovation supports inventors and commercializes innovations across the System's eleven universities and eight state agencies. Using a rigorous process to guide projects from new innovations through market commercialization, the Innovation team focuses on protecting System intellectual property, increasing inventor engagement through education and outreach, building industry partnerships, supporting start-ups and entrepreneurial ventures, and facilitating access to critical resources to accelerate commercialization. In joining this team, the Senior Director will serve as a catalyst for the formation and growth of new start-up companies based on technologies and research developed at TAMUS member institutions and agencies. The System is a powerhouse of research and innovation, and within the spectrum of commercialization activities, new company formation remains an area with considerable upside and untapped potential for growth.

The Senior Director will be specifically focused on building and leading a team to cultivate new venture creation and entrepreneurship, distinct from traditional licensing. They will work closely with faculty and staff inventors and entrepreneurs throughout all stages of the venture creation process, including but not limited to facilitating business planning, development, and connections; coaching to develop investable business plans and identifying funding opportunities; identifying specific business and scientific milestones critical to commercial success; utilizing strategies to de-risk technologies and acquiring funding throughout the innovation continuum; identifying funding options from state and federal programs as

well as angel, venture capital, and other investment networks; cultivating strong relationships within the Texas investment communities; and identifying entrepreneurs to lead, advise, mentor, and potentially invest in start-ups. This position will also serve as a key member of the Texas A&M Innovation leadership team and will work closely with the Chief Innovation Officer to shape the strategic direction of innovation initiatives across the entire System.

The successful candidate will bring deep expertise in technology-based venture creation, a core understanding of the current “state of practice” in entrepreneurial education and support, a firm grasp of technology transfer mechanisms, as well as a solid basis for understanding the capital and funding cycle of high technology ventures. Ideally, they will have 10 years of experience in growing start-up companies, attracting investment to early-stage ventures, working with technology incubators and start-up accelerators, and advancing the commercialization of new technologies. Knowledge and experience working in a university setting or similarly complex organization is advantageous.

The Texas A&M University System has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

TEXAS A&M INNOVATION

Texas A&M Innovation is dedicated to supporting inventors and commercializing innovations across The Texas A&M University System. By shepherding projects from conception through to commercialization, it works to ensure a smooth transition from the lab and/or classroom to the market. The team at Texas A&M Innovation works with inventors through a comprehensive process to manage Intellectual Property (IP), including engaging with the creators of IP, forming IP protection strategies, conducting market research, and implementing commercialization plans resulting in both the licensing of technology and the creation of start-ups and new companies. By bringing together entrepreneurs, investors, and industry partners through signature events such as [Innovation Forward](#), [Texas A&M New Ventures Competition](#), [Innovation Connect](#), and [InnovationU](#), Texas A&M Innovation is creating an enabling environment that ignites ideas and connects funding with new business opportunities. Texas A&M Innovation also plays a major role in securing the continued growth of the University System’s IP portfolio.

THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of \$7.2 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities, a comprehensive health science center, eight state agencies, and the RELLIS Campus, the Texas A&M System educates more than 152,000 students and makes more than 24 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, research and development expenditures exceed \$1 billion and help drive the state’s economy. The flagship campus in College Station is within a three-hour drive of five of the nation’s 20 largest cities. Opened in 1876 as the state's first public institution of higher learning, Texas

A&M today is a research-intensive university, home to more than 74,000 students, making it the largest in the United States. It is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), holds R1 Carnegie classification of very high research activity, and ranks in the top 10 among public universities on annual research expenditures (NSF HERD Survey).

LEADERSHIP

Pete O'Neill is Chief Innovation Officer for Texas A&M Innovation, where he leads the team that manages the intellectual property for the eleven universities and eight state agencies that comprise The Texas A&M University System. He has previous experience in healthcare commercialization as the Executive Director of Cleveland Clinic Innovations and aerospace commercialization as Deputy Director of the Great Lakes Industrial Technology Center at NASA Glenn. He also has experience leading start-up companies, as CEO of the Cleveland Clinic spin-off company Custom Orthopaedic Solutions and CEO of PedialyDx Inc., a company that uses machine learning to analyze the acoustics of baby cry as a diagnostic tool. Pete has a degree in aeronautical engineering from MIT.

THE ROLE

Reporting to the Chief Innovation Officer, the Senior Director for New Ventures will be a visionary and strategic leader responsible for driving the development and execution of new venture opportunities emerging from TAMUS intellectual property. A track record evaluating investment and new business opportunities, advising on product development and go-to-market strategies, arranging funding mechanisms to launch and grow new ventures, as well as the ability to build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders will be essential for success in this role. Activities in the first year will be primarily focused on a combination of growing internal demand and building external interest in partnering with Texas A&M Innovation and the broader System. The Senior Director's efforts will be critical to fostering a robust ecosystem for innovation and start-up creation.

The position will be located either in College Station or another Texas-based location that enables seamless access to Texas investment communities, robust technology transfer networks, and TAMUS member institutions and agencies. The compensation package for this position will be structured to allow for participation in commercialization revenue.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Senior Director will play a lead role in addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Shape and Implement a Strategic Vision for New Ventures

The Senior Director will play a pivotal role in developing a comprehensive strategy that identifies and pursues strategic opportunities for institutional start-ups and new company formation. Working closely

with the Chief Innovation Officer, they will set ambitious goals, prioritize initiatives, and ensure that all efforts align with the university's broader strategic objectives. The Senior Director will integrate insights from market trends, stakeholder needs, and internal capabilities to craft a vision that not only drives growth in the number of new and successful ventures created but also enhances the System's reputation as a leader in innovation, entrepreneurship, and new company formation.

Support Faculty and Staff in Developing Start-ups and Commercializing Discoveries

The Senior Director for New Ventures will be instrumental in providing comprehensive support to faculty and staff inventors and entrepreneurs in launching new technology-based ventures. They will help identify high-potential projects suitable for new company formation, and subsequently coach and mentor project teams through the start-up process. By facilitating business planning development, identifying funding sources and potential investors, and advising teams to develop investable business plans, the Senior Director will help transform groundbreaking research and innovative ideas into viable commercial products and services. The Senior Director will also work to de-risk technologies and help start-ups meet specific business and scientific milestones, thereby increasing their chances of success in the marketplace. In cooperation with project teams, they will provide support to identify co-founders, establish management teams, and form boards of directors with the capacity to launch new ventures successfully. Additionally, the Senior Director will help to develop financial and valuation models, analyze funding needs, and determine the optimal use of funds to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of these new ventures.

Build and Leverage a Strong Network of Investors and Mentors

The Senior Director for New Ventures will play a pivotal role in contributing high-value assets to Texas A&M, including investors, technology transfer networks, and key industry contacts. This role requires cultivating robust relationships within the Texas investment communities, encompassing leading venture capitalists, angel investors, and corporate funding partners. The successful candidate will identify and attract experienced entrepreneurs to lead, advise, mentor, and potentially invest in start-ups. Additionally, the Senior Director will develop a dedicated pool of subject matter experts to mentor, advise, and/or manage teams on technical, regulatory, legal, and business topics. By establishing and nurturing these vital connections, the Senior Director will create a dynamic and supportive ecosystem that drives the success of new ventures and enhances Texas A&M's standing as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Identify and Secure Funding Opportunities for Start-up Creation and New Ventures

The director will play a key role in identifying and securing funding opportunities for Texas A&M's start-ups and new ventures. This includes exploring federal and state funding mechanisms, such as the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, which provide significant resources for early-stage companies. By staying informed about available grants and

funding initiatives, the director will help ensure that the university's start-ups have the financial support they need to thrive. They will also provide guidance and support in the application process, helping researchers and entrepreneurs develop competitive proposals and secure funding for their projects. The person in this role will be familiar with various start-up competitions, angel investor networks, and venture capital opportunities to attract investment.

Build and Lead a Dynamic Team

The Senior Director for New Ventures will be responsible for building and leading a dynamic team that will be instrumental in managing new venture pipeline projects and company portfolios. They will support the recruitment, training, and development of this team alongside existing colleagues at Texas A&M Innovation. The Senior Director will lead the team to meet the strategic objectives of Texas A&M's innovation ecosystem, assigning projects based on expertise and experience, facilitating professional development opportunities, and creating a culture of client service to the project teams they coach, mentor, and advise. By creating an environment that attracts top talent, the Senior Director will enable the team to effectively support the spin out of new companies and start-ups based on groundbreaking research and innovative ideas generated within TAMUS.

Qualifications and Characteristics

The ideal candidate will possess many of the following qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- **Innovative and Visionary Leadership:** Demonstrated experience in providing strategic direction and visionary leadership within a complex organization, particularly in environments focused on new venture creation and entrepreneurship. The ideal candidate will have 10 years of experience in growing start-up companies, in investment, incubator/accelerator, or university settings.
- **Business Acumen:** Experience evaluating start-up and early-stage company investment potential. Demonstrated expertise in creating business plans, and an understanding of financial models, valuation, and funding needs analysis.
- **Entrepreneurial Experience:** Proven experience in entrepreneurship, including successful launch and management of a technology-based venture. Demonstrated firsthand knowledge of the challenges and processes involved in starting and growing a business.
- **Academic and Collaborative Leadership:** Leadership experience in an academic environment or experience working collaboratively with academic partners, facilitating business planning development, and managing academic-industry collaborations.

- **Student and Faculty Engagement:** A commitment to promoting access and student success by providing support and mentorship to faculty, staff, and students in developing start-ups and commercializing discoveries.
- **Interpersonal and Communication Skills:** Effective interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to develop and engage faculty, staff, and students at Texas A&M. Strong public speaking, organizational, leadership, and supervisory skills.
- **Relationship Building:** Ability to maintain and develop relationships with Texas A&M's internal and external constituencies, including investors, technology transfer networks, and key contacts within the industry.
- **Cross-Industry Knowledge:** Deep knowledge of the needs of technology-based start-up companies in various industries such as life/health sciences, physical sciences, and digital industries.
- **Technology Transfer Expertise:** A firm grasp of technology transfer mechanisms and the capital and funding cycle of high-technology ventures.
- **Educational Background:** Bachelor's degree required.

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resume and letters of interest responding to the requirements outlined in the position profile) should be submitted via Isaacson, Miller's website:

Andrew Lee, Managing Partner
Raul Bernal, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/texas-am-university/director-new-ventures>

Electronic submission of application is required.