



**Search for the Director, Accelerating Resilience Innovations in Drylands Institute
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

The University of New Mexico (UNM) seeks a dynamic and inspirational Director to build on tremendous momentum and chart a vision for the future of the Accelerating Resilience Innovations in Drylands Institute (ARID, or the Institute). Capitalizing on the strengths of New Mexico's flagship institution, ARID stands at the forefront of climate resilience innovation, empowering New Mexico residents, businesses, and organisms to thrive despite the impacts of climate change on water, energy, ecosystems, and community health. The Director has a singular opportunity to organize, inspire, and lead some of the world's most talented climate resilience scholars to even greater levels of sustainability-related research excellence, transdisciplinary innovation, and societal impact.

UNM provides education to nearly 27,000 students, the majority of whom are New Mexico residents. The University has one of the most diverse student bodies of any major research University in the nation and is one of only 22 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in the U.S. that has a Carnegie Classification of Highest Research Activity (R1). UNM is ranked among the top 100 Research and Development-Performing Institutions in the U.S., with expenditures of over \$350 million annually. UNM provides an excellent environment for research-University education and training and produces a unique demographic of superbly trained researchers for our nation.

Launched in 2023, ARID's domain expertise in both fundamental inquiry and application, combined with a commitment to New Mexico and the Southwestern US, and drylands globally, defines its unique strength. In its first 18 months, ARID has raised \$18 million in funding to support research, education, outreach, and community engagement activities of the Institute. With the help of 25 core faculty members, ARID's unique blend of scholars and collaborators contributes to its prime position to impact resilience research worldwide.

As one of UNM's premier strategic Category III interdisciplinary research centers, ARID serves a dual purpose - building capacity for novel transdisciplinary research to increase climate resilience, as well as inclusively and equitably training and educating a diverse next generation. Reporting to the Vice President for Research, Dr. Ellen Fisher, the next Director will lead a highly respected unit that is poised for new opportunities to innovate and grow its reputation as a beacon of climate resilience research within four primary areas; sustainable water, adaptive infrastructures, healthy ecosystems, and community health and vitality.

The incoming Director — in alignment with the University's newly developed [UNM 2040 Strategic Plan](#) and in partnership with the University's dedicated faculty, staff, and student employees — will set a

trajectory for the Institute that recognizes the central role of transdisciplinary research to UNM and the state.

To continue its remarkable growth, ARID seeks a visionary scholar-leader and facilitator who will collaborate toward bold, strategic directions as the Institute aims to position itself as a leader in climate resilience and adaptation research, contributing both to academic progress and community-driven solutions. The Director will be charged with expanding ARID's research footprint and visibility, advancing the Institute's dedication to diversity in all of its forms, building a sustainable research hub in an inclusive and supportive environment for emerging leaders, identifying and securing diversified, sustainable funding sources, and developing new partnerships with a range of stakeholders. They will bring a deep understanding of the needs of a broad range of researchers in the climate resilience fields as well as a facility to communicate with a variety of audiences. The successful candidate will leverage strategic partnerships within ARID, the broader University, and external stakeholders to further the Institute's reach and impact.

The University of New Mexico has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to work with the search committee. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

About The University of New Mexico

[UNM Land Acknowledgment:](#)

Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

Founded by an act of the New Mexico Territorial Legislature in 1889, the University of New Mexico opened its doors in June 1892, 20 years before its namesake would become a state. The University now offers over 215 degree and certificate programs at its Main and North Campuses in Albuquerque, including approximately 94 baccalaureates, 71 masters, and 37 doctoral degrees through the Anderson School of Management, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, College of Fine Arts, Graduate Studies, Honors College, College of Nursing, College of Pharmacy, College of Population Health, College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences, School of Architecture and Planning, School of Engineering, School of Law, School of Medicine, and University College.

UNM enrolls around 27,000 students, with over 23,000 on the Main Campus in Albuquerque and over 4,000 at the branch campuses in Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos, and Valencia, and also supports an educational hub and regional health center in Rio Rancho. The Main Campus student population reflects the ethnically diverse population of New Mexico and includes many historically underrepresented groups - approximately 44% of the student population is Hispanic, 5% are Indigenous, 4% Asian, 2% African American, 3% multi-racial, and 5% are international. The Hispanic student population includes a rich range of cultural heritages, some with deep roots going back many generations in the region, while others are recent immigrants from a variety of nations in Latin America; Indigenous students come largely from 24 tribes that have ancestral homeland ties to NM including 20 Pueblos, the Navajo Nation, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and the Fort Still Apache Tribe. The populations at the branches are also diverse, with, for example, the student population of the Gallup campus being nearly 70% Native American. It is a point of strength and pride that the University is composed of a complex intersection of cultures and backgrounds.

UNM boasts an outstanding faculty that includes four National Academy of Sciences/Engineering Members, five National Academy of Inventors Fellows, 60 Fulbright Scholar program awardees, and many fellows of various other associations and societies. According to a study in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* examining more than 1,500 public and private universities across the U.S., UNM employs the most Hispanic and Indigenous faculty members in the country. Faculty publish in high-impact professional journals as well as with major academic publishers such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, and the University of New Mexico Press.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

The mission of the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) is to advance innovation and discovery and to center research in education at UNM. As New Mexico's premier R1 institution, the University is uniquely positioned to provide an unparalleled education for students and world-class opportunities for faculty and staff. The OVPR is supported by a dynamic team of staff and faculty with an annual budget of approximately \$17 million.

There are three types of centers and institutes at UNM. Category I research centers reside within academic departments, Category II centers reside within colleges or schools, and Category III centers cut across units of the University and report directly to the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) or the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. There are currently 11 research [centers and institutes](#) managed by the OVPR. Included in the 11 centers and institutes is the New Mexico Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (NM EPSCoR). Each center/institute has broad faculty and interdisciplinary representation, as well as external grant funding and interdisciplinary programs. The OVPR provides an overarching management support structure that includes high-level HR, facilities, financial support, information technologies, management assistance, and staff development.

Although some of these centers and institutes support themselves through grants and contracts, others are centrally funded by the OVPR as they provide support, research, and analysis of importance to New Mexico and UNM.

The administrative costs of the OVPR, including support for Centers and Institutes, are currently entirely funded by the recovery of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs from grants to main campus researchers. Additional F&A is returned to the OVPR from grants to the [UNM Health Sciences Center](#) (HSC) investigators that include collaborations with main and branch campus researchers, based upon the level of effort by the investigator on the main or branch campus. After the OVPR costs are covered, the F&A is then distributed to centers, schools, colleges, departments, and PI's.

Since Dr. Ellen Fisher joined UNM as the Vice President for Research in 2021, there has been a dedicated commitment to furthering the OVPR's reach and impact across the University through a culture of collaboration and transparency. The five-year research strategic plan outlines goals focusing broadly on strengthening the research enterprise at UNM while ensuring ethical and compliant research practices. There are also opportunities to build and enhance external relationships with private entities, government, and community partners to secure financial resources and realize UNM's ambitious objectives.

ACCELERATING RESILIENCE INNOVATIONS IN DRYLANDS INSTITUTE

The ARID Institute serves as a cross-campus hub connecting UNM departments, schools, colleges, and centers united by two central goals: (1) build capacity for novel transdisciplinary research to increase climate resilience, and (2) inclusively and equitably train and educate a diverse next generation.

These goals leverage UNM's outstanding expertise in water, energy, policy, natural sciences, economics, education, health science, computer science, mathematics, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. Moreover, ARID's transdisciplinary and translational research will accelerate climate resilience in drylands in four integral ways: (1) innovate strategies for sustainable water with solutions to increase water quantity, water quality, and water use-efficiency; (2) sustain healthy ecosystems that protect biodiversity and maintain services that support the economic, cultural, and ecological functions of drylands; (3) improve community health through the mitigation of water & energy insecurity and inequities in exposure to environmental harms; and (4) grow a diverse, inclusive, and vibrant economy in clean energy.

ARID maximizes the resilience of drylands to climate change by fostering transdisciplinary research, co-creating innovations with community, management and industry partners, and equitably training the next generation to improve economic, human, and ecosystem health in New Mexico and beyond. The vision for ARID includes serving as a hub to facilitate connections, partnerships, and opportunities both internally at UNM and throughout the region. The founding faculty of ARID span multiple UNM programs,

departments, and colleges, including Biology, Water Resources, Civil, Construction & Environmental Engineering, Earth & Planetary Sciences, Chemical & Biological Engineering, Sustainability Studies, Southwest Environmental Finance Center, Geography & Environmental Studies, Political Science, Nursing, Natural Resources & Environmental Planning, and History.

The UNM Climate and Health Allied Network for Geospatial and Environmental Science (CHANGES) Center, housed in the Accelerating Resilience Innovations in Drylands Institute, received a \$3.83 million award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)/National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) in 2024 that will support the mission of improving climate resilience in New Mexico. In addition to this award from the NIH, ARID also has substantial ongoing support from Department of Energy (DOE), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the State of New Mexico, private foundations, and numerous other projects that exemplify the breadth and depth of ARID's scientific community.

For a full description of ARID and related activities, please visit <http://arid.unm.edu>

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR

Reporting directly to the Vice President for Research, the Director of ARID will oversee all of the activities of the Institute, including developing strategic plans, supervising faculty and staff projects, and managing the Institute's budget. The Director will also represent ARID to the University and external communities at all levels. They will establish a vibrant and well-funded collaborative research enterprise; create active research partnerships within the University and with strategic partners across the region; mentor investigators, post-docs, and students in developing research programs within the ARID mission; and enhance ARID's portfolio of external funding by facilitating and catalyzing the acquisition of grants and contracts awarded to sustainability-related faculty. They will serve on the OVPR Research Council to develop and implement OVPR initiatives in conjunction with other research leaders across campus. This is a tenure-line academic appointment, negotiable within an academic unit appropriate to the candidate's field. Depending on the candidate's interests and experience, a non-tenure research appointment is also negotiable.

The next Director will leverage New Mexico's significant intellectual resources and dedication to workforce and ecosystem development to further ARID's already large impact by addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Develop and execute a clear and compelling vision for ARID

As the first permanent leader of ARID, the Director will further define, refine, and execute a shared vision for ARID that fulfills its most ambitious aspirations. The Director will collaborate with others who value sustainability efforts to define and implement a strategic vision and plan for ARID, enhancing the impact

of climate resilience and sustainability research on society and identifying future strategies to remain nimble and responsive within a dynamic state and federal funding landscape. Bringing a collaborative and compassionate leadership approach, the Director will build positive relationships and trust with faculty, staff, and students to promote a spirit of community, equity, and support across UNM. In addition, the Director will work with the Institute's diverse allies, including affiliated faculty, UNM's OVPR, and other research, government, community, and industry partners to ensure buy-in and create a clear and compelling roadmap for ARID's success.

Advance ARID's research productivity and infrastructure to attract the nation's brightest minds as faculty, students, and collaborators

Essential to ARID's mission as a Category III research center is the creation of a dynamic research ecosystem that enables interdisciplinary research and breakthroughs in climate resilience research. As the new Director, they will encourage creativity and greater research productivity while also ensuring an equitable supportive infrastructure that eases barriers to research success. Further, they will integrate the Institute's research mission with graduate and undergraduate educational programs of the highest quality, ensuring the next generation of investigators is fully prepared to advance the field. The Director will also be tasked with supervising ARID staff, projects, and activities, including those that oversee research administration functions and compliance with University, State, and Federal policies and regulations.

Strengthen active partnerships and build new relationships that advance ARID's mission

The Director will engage a broad spectrum of collaborators, including UNM departments, government agencies, industry leaders, Indigenous communities, and non-profit organizations to foster interdisciplinary projects and initiatives that maximize ARID's regional and global impact. Through strategic outreach and relationship-building, the Director will position ARID as a central hub, representing the Institute across the University and external communities at all levels. The Director will also participate in OVPR's Research Council to help develop and implement OVPR initiatives and provide input and feedback to the OVPR leadership team.

Establish solid finances to support ARID as a vibrant and well-funded collaborative research enterprise

The Director will enhance ARID's portfolio of external funding by facilitating and catalyzing the acquisition of grants and contracts awarded to sustainability-related faculty researchers. To strengthen the breadth and depth of ARID's research and funding portfolio, the successful candidate will have a strong background in financial management, revenue generation, and diversification of funding sources. Moreover, the Director will stay attuned to the developing grantmaking landscape at the local, state, and federal levels. As the chief administrator for the Institute, the Director will prepare, oversee and serve as responsible agent for the ARID budget.

Foster a culture within ARID that prioritizes student and faculty success while promoting a strong sense of belonging for all members

ARID is dedicated to fostering an inclusive culture that prioritizes student and faculty success. Through impactful research and education, community engagement, and local-to-global collaboration, the Director will ensure that principles of equity, inclusion, fairness, and justice are integral to the Institute's mission. By continually refining recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and participant code-of-conduct procedures, the Director will create an equitable environment that celebrates diverse and individual perspectives, including those related to race, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability or health status, veteran status, geographic origin, and socio-economic background.

Preferred Qualifications and Characteristics

- Ph.D. (or equivalent degree) at the time of application in a sustainability-related field such as environmental science, engineering, public health and environmental health sciences, environmental economics, ecology, geoscience, or other sustainability-related field
- Record of scholarly achievement in sustainability science or related fields, commensurate with obtaining tenure at a top research university
- 3-5 years of experience managing sponsored research projects and operations
- Successful leadership of research-based, interdisciplinary initiatives
- Record of success in securing competitive research funding, including for large, multi-investigator, multi-institutional projects
- Demonstrated experience of successful leadership within a highly productive research setting
- Experience with the development, coordination, and integration of interdisciplinary graduate research and educational programs
- Experience in collaboration in interdisciplinary research as well as between universities and national laboratories
- Management experience, including oversight on day-to-day operations, maintaining budgets, policy and process development and implementation, supervision of staff, creating a safe research environment that is compliant with federal, state, and local regulations
- Demonstrated ability to engage with community partners including place-based research, outreach, engaging with tribal entities, and Hispanic communities
- Ability to clearly articulate strategic vision and planning for a research-based interdisciplinary center

Location

New Mexico is known as "The Land of Enchantment" or "Tierra del Encanto" because of its scenic beauty and rich history. New Mexico offers a wide variety of adventures, art, music and dance, breathtaking landscapes, and multicultural heritage, including a combination of Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo cultures that cannot be found in any other state in the U.S. New Mexico has the highest percentage of Hispanics in the U.S., including descendants of the original Spanish/Mexican settlers who have lived in the area for more than 400 years, as well as more recent immigrants from a variety of nations in Latin America. It has the second-highest percentage of Native Americans as a proportion of the population, and the fourth-highest total number of Native Americans. The major Native American nations in the state are Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache peoples.

Oil and gas production, agriculture, the arts, the film industry, tourism, and federal government spending are important drivers of New Mexico's economy. State and local governments have a comprehensive system of tax credits and technical assistance to promote job growth and business investment, especially in new technologies. The state is home to more Ph.D. holders per capita than any other state in the country as it is home to Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Intel, several other research facilities, and several land management agencies including the Forest Service and National Park Service.

New Mexico has one of the most diverse landscapes in the world, with a range of incredible outdoor adventures to match. The geography ranges from snow-capped 13,000-foot peaks, wildflower fields, thick forests of cottonwoods, white sand dunes, volcanoes and lava fields, to vast expanses of rangeland and desert. It is also home to two NSF-funded long term ecological research (LTER) programs, one of which is managed by ARID researchers. The Sevilleta LTER ([Sevilleta LTER - LTER](#)) at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge encompasses approximately 3,600 km² and acts as a unique transition zone for several biomes. Located approximately 60 miles south of Albuquerque, UNM students, faculty, and staff maintain significant sustainability research programs at the Sevilleta research station.

The University of New Mexico Main Campus is located in Albuquerque, the most populous city in New Mexico with its own rich culture and heritage as one of the oldest cities in the U.S. It has a multicultural heritage and history where diverse influences are a part of everyday life. Averaging 310 days of sunshine a year, it is also a great place for outdoor activities, including biking, skiing, or golfing on some of the best golf courses in the Southwest. Residents and visitors alike take advantage of the many traditional New Mexican restaurants, enjoy world-class visual and performing arts, and visit the many museums and historical sites around the state. Albuquerque is home to the International Balloon Fiesta, the world's largest gathering of hot-air balloons. The Sandia Mountains run along the eastern side of Albuquerque.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-new-mexico-arid-institute/director>

Joe Kralick, Ibaad Nazeer, and Kati O’Hearn
Isaacson, Miller
www.imsearch.com

UNM is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, disability, or protected veteran status.