



Search for the Executive Director, University of Texas at Arlington Research Institute (UTARI)
University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, Texas

THE SEARCH

The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) invites nominations and applications for the position of Executive Director (ED) of the University of Texas at Arlington Research Institute (UTARI). The University seeks a dynamic, visionary leader who will advance the institute's innovative research mission, and leading-edge capabilities in fabrication, robotics, machine learning, biomedical technologies, and manufacturing technologies. UTA is one of the fastest growing doctoral institutions in the nation, and this is an opportunity for the next Executive Director to advance and promote applied research and collaboration within the institution and to support industry and technology-based economic development in the Dallas-Fort Worth region and nation-wide.

The University of Texas at Arlington is a Texas Tier One research institution focused on meeting the needs of Texans today, tomorrow, and into the future with bold solutions and global impact. As a comprehensive teaching, research, and public service institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge through scholarship and creative work, the University is committed to creating a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization of discoveries by a community of scholars. UTARI reflects this commitment by bridging the gap between academic research and product development in the engineering space, transforming ideas into realities through unbounded research and innovative developments that sustain business and industry, advance humankind, and benefit our global society. UTARI is located in Fort Worth, and as part of the commitment by the university to expand to the west of Arlington, including the creation of a new campus, [UTA West](#), UTARI will continue to serve as a strategic partner to faculty, students, and academic leaders across the university to foster interdisciplinary research and innovation.

Reporting to the Vice President for Research and Innovation, the ED will help position UTARI as a respected leader in engineering research and development by increasing the institute's visibility in the community, strengthening partnerships, and identifying opportunities for greater research funding with a focus on applied research. The ED will develop, implement, and effectively communicate a vision that encourages productive collaborations across the university and with external partners. In doing so, the ED will oversee initiatives dedicated to catalyzing engineering research and development in UTARI's current portfolio – establishing critical partnerships with other academic institutions, government agencies, major

corporations, and local industry – while exploring new relevant opportunities to increase UTARI’s impact. As an advocate for UTARI and applied research activity, the ED will broadcast the institute’s compelling story to further generate financial support for the institute’s growth and expansion.

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

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Located on a 420-acre campus in the heart of the thriving Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metro area (population over 8 million), The University of Texas at Arlington is a comprehensive teaching, research, and public service institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge through scholarship and creative work.

As one of the largest and most diverse universities in Texas, UT Arlington is committed to providing access and ensuring student success, and to a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization of discoveries by its community of scholars. The University promotes lifelong learning through its academic, continuing education, and experiential learning programs. The faculty, staff, and student community share diverse cultural values that foster inclusivity and cultivate mutual respect.

Founded in 1895 as a private liberal arts institution, UT Arlington enrolls over 40,000 students and employs nearly 5,000 faculty and staff. The University is designated as a Hispanic- Serving Institution and an Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education.

UTA was one of just six institutions nationwide in 2022 to earn the Seal of Excelencia certification, a prestigious honor granted to colleges and universities for their commitment to accelerating Latino student success. The university ranks No. 2 nationally for veterans (Military Times, 2024), No. 3 in Texas for advancing social mobility (U.S. News & World Report, 2024) and No. 5 in the United States for its undergraduate ethnic diversity (U.S. News & World Report, 2024). UT Arlington’s approximately 270,000 alumni occupy leadership positions at many of the 21 Fortune 500 companies headquartered in North Texas and contribute to the university’s \$28.8 billion annual economic impact on Texas.

Guided by world-class faculty members, the university’s more than 46,000 students in campus-based, and online degree programs represent 120 countries and pursue more than 184 bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in a broad range of disciplines. UT Arlington is dedicated to producing the lifelong learners and critical thinkers that the region and nation demand. More than 60 percent of the university’s 250,000 alumni live in North Texas and contribute to an annual economic impact of \$17.1 billion in the region.

In addition to nurturing student success, UTA is focused on making an impact through innovative research. Anchored by its five strategic pillars—health and the human condition, sustainable communities, global environmental impact, data-driven discovery, and culture and societal transformations—the University’s research portfolio saw significant growth over the past decade, with expenditures reaching over \$155 million at the end of FY2024. Faculty work in state-of-the-art facilities has resulted in important breakthroughs in areas such as sustainable infrastructure, healthy aging, high-energy physics, cardiovascular disease, machine-learning systems, and more.

In 2021, the combination of outstanding academics and innovative research contributed to the University once again receiving Carnegie R-1 “Very High Research Activity” designation and becoming just the fourth university in the state to achieve Texas Tier One status and another milestone of excellence in its pursuits. By providing exceptional educational opportunities and addressing important societal challenges, UTA enhances the quality of life in Texas and beyond.

University governance is vested in a nine-member Board of Regents of the UT System, nominated by the governor, and approved by the Texas Senate. In addition to its main campus in Arlington, UTA has two facilities in neighboring Fort Worth: a downtown campus called UTA Fort Worth that is tailored for working professionals and the Research Institute on the banks of the Trinity River that is focused on bridging the gap between academic research and product development.

ARLINGTON, TEXAS & DALLAS-FORT WORTH

Arlington, Texas is one of the fastest-growing communities in the nation. Located between Dallas and Fort Worth, a dynamic metropolitan area and global center of commerce and culture, the region has one of the highest concentrations of corporate headquarters in the United States and is rich with opportunities for industry partnerships. As the Texas economy booms, companies and institutions benefit from partnering with universities like UTA to accelerate knowledge and tackle grand challenges.

With a greater Dallas population exceeding 8 million (the fourth largest and fifth-most diverse metropolitan area), the region is home to the 10th most frequently traveled airport in the world and has been identified by *Forbes* as one of five cities “poised to be the next Silicon Valley tech hub.” The region is No. 9 in North America for tech talent and No. 5 for women in the tech workforce. Dallas boasts the nation’s largest urban arts district, which consists of world-class museums and a luminous cluster of performing arts spaces, highlighted by the Winspear Opera House, described by *Opera* magazine as America’s finest. It is home to four professional sports teams and offers easy access to a range of outdoor activities throughout the region. With the Trinity River, White Rock Lake, almost 400 parks, and over 125 miles of urban hiking and biking trails, the city provides abundant opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, and the city has been named one of the Greenest Cities in the world. UTA students and faculty benefit from proximity to the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area as an extension of the classroom, characterized by engaged learning projects and community partnerships.

LEADERSHIP

Dr. Jennifer Cowley, President: Joining UTA in 2022, Dr. Cowley is the first woman to serve as president of The University of Texas at Arlington. She is also a professor of public affairs and planning in the College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs. Dr. Cowley has dedicated her career to public service. Before joining UT Arlington, she was the provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of North Texas, where she led economic development partnerships, advanced diversity and inclusion initiatives, fostered student success, bolstered the research portfolio, and helped increase enrollment.

Dr. Cowley earned her PhD in urban and regional science, master's degree in urban planning, and bachelor's degree in political science from Texas A&M University and master's degrees in interdisciplinary studies and public administration from UNT. She is a fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners and the National Academy of Public Administrators.

Dr. Kate Miller, Vice President of Research and Innovation: Dr. Kate C. Miller has served as Vice President for Research and Innovation at UTA since the fall of 2022. A geophysicist by training, she came to the university with two decades of leadership in higher education at multiple institutions in Texas and Wyoming. Her research has focused primarily on the application of active source seismology to understanding the origin and evolution of the continents, as well as the sources of earthquakes and other environmental hazards. She also has a background in oil and gas exploration and development as well as long standing interests and accomplishments in recruiting students and faculty from groups under-represented in STEM careers.

Miller's extensive expertise is geared to drive the University's research enterprise into a new stage of growth and innovation. This includes a focus on high-impact initiatives such as substantially expanding research support services; shifting to new approaches in innovation and entrepreneurship; and identifying key opportunities aligned to UTA's strategic plan.

Having hit a record \$155 million-plus in research expenditures, Kate is excited to welcome innovative ideas and entrepreneurial mindsets that will continue to elevate UTA's research impact in biomedical research, semiconductors, informatics and artificial intelligence, energy and sustainability, manufacturing, and others.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON RESEARCH INSTITUTE (UTARI)

The University of Texas at Arlington Research Institute (UTARI) serves as a distinguished applied research organization committed to bridging the gap between academic discovery and real-world application. Established in 1987 as the Automation & Robotics Research Institute through a collaborative initiative involving the Fort Worth Chamber, UTA, the State of Texas, the Jack Newell Family, and numerous other donors, UTARI has since become an essential component of UTA's Office for Research and Innovation,

fostering innovation in critical sectors such as biomedical technologies, automation, unmanned systems, and composite material structures.

Situated on a 13-acre site owned by UTA in Fort Worth's Riverbend Business Park, UTARI boasts a 48,000 square foot facility that includes 14,000 square feet of specialized laboratory space. These labs are outfitted with millions of dollars' worth of advanced equipment for machining, rapid prototyping, 3D printing, composite materials manufacturing, and indoor testing of unmanned systems, positioning UTARI as a hub for innovation in the region.

As a university-level research institute, UTARI actively collaborates across UTA's various colleges, fostering interdisciplinary research and innovation. The institute engages with universities, national laboratories, and industry partners throughout North Texas and across the nation, driving impactful research initiatives. With a focus on securing and performing externally sponsored research, UTARI's full-time research scientists work diligently on projects funded by organizations such as the DOD, DOE, NASA, NSF, and NIH. The institute also has extensive experience working on research projects with ITAR and CUI requirements and collaboration with small businesses on SBIR and STTR projects.

Notably, UTARI has successfully secured continuous funding for over seven years from a DOD research lab for modeling composites and composite structures, efforts led by faculty and researchers from UTARI's Institute for Predictive Performance Methodologies (IPPM). Other recent successes include funding to develop better and safer technologies to reduce additional injuries during medical evacuation from the battlefield, research exploring the feasibility of people who are visually impaired working with teleoperated robotics, and enhancing open networked airborne computing platforms for autonomous systems.

In addition to its research capabilities, UTARI employs an operations team that handles business development, financial management, and grant administration, ensuring effective project execution and sustainability. Each semester, UTARI also hosts dozens of undergraduate and graduate students, providing invaluable research experience and fostering the next generation of engineers and scientists.

A notable aspect of UTARI is its relationship with the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC), a separate unit that also operates out of UTA's Office of Research and Innovation. TMAC's state and metroplex offices are housed within the UTARI building, facilitating collaboration opportunities on R&D projects with small and medium-sized businesses.

Looking ahead, UTARI, in partnership with the College of Engineering, is constructing a new outdoor netted structure for unmanned vehicle research and testing, expected to open in Spring 2025. This expansion will further enhance UTARI's capabilities, reinforcing its commitment to innovation and collaboration in applied research. Through its rich history and continued dedication to excellence, UTARI stands as a vital resource for advancing technology and fostering economic growth.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Vice President for Research and Innovation, the ED will have four direct reports including an Associate Director, a Financial Manager, a Business Development associate, and an Executive Assistant. The ED will provide leadership and vision; promote external visibility of UTARI; encourage collaboration that transcends college, department, and unit lines; cultivate strong relationships with external partners, sponsors, and thought leaders; manage fiscal and physical resources in partnership with UTARI's operational staff of 10; and oversee the research activities of the 20 research staff.

The Executive Director will also hold an endowed chair position that will enable them to direct funds in support of ideation and generation of new research thrusts.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The ED will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Chart and implement a unifying strategic vision for the future.

The ED will act as a leader in formulating a vision for UTARI and as an executor when translating that vision into strategic priorities. Familiarity with the greater research enterprise in a university setting will be critical for the ED's success. With a creative and entrepreneurial spirit, the successful ED will effectively distinguish UTARI from other research institutes and position the institute as an important thought partner and collaborator at UTA and beyond. The successful ED will be a bold visionary, able to pair a deep understanding of UTARI and its assets with knowledge of related state and federal priorities. The ED will be able to align what is current in the field with possibilities at UTA and UTARI to identify the next great opportunities for impact in research, innovation, and commercialization. The ED's ability to craft a shared vision for the future that is forward-thinking, strategic, and sustainable is vital to UTARI's success.

Identify opportunities for greater research productivity and attraction of research funds.

Bolstering UTARI's research mission will be central to the ED's role and requires a strengthening and deepening of relationships with external partners – with the goal of attracting resources into the institute – while simultaneously bolstering UTARI's research infrastructure and encouraging staff and faculty pursuit of newer, greater opportunities.

The role requires deep knowledge of grant and research infrastructure. The next ED will actively promote the submission of multidisciplinary grant proposals and ensure project management and supplemental administrative support is available to achieve sustainability. Prioritizing new initiatives that enhance staff and faculty scholarship, increase academic excellence, and expand and diversify extramural funding will be key to this endeavor. The ED will provide leadership for growth in research funding; the opportunities

available to UTARI will be dictated by their ability to generate and diversify revenue streams, be they in the form of sponsored research, industry contracts and/or consortia or grant attainment.

UTARI's location in the rapidly growing and dynamic Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, a global center of commerce and culture with one of the highest concentrations of corporate headquarters in the United States, is rich with opportunities for industry, foundation, and municipal partnerships. The successful ED will establish and cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships with local industry, tying the impactful work of UTARI into the economic development of Dallas-Fort Worth.

The ED will play a crucial advocacy role for engineering, innovation, and applied research, identifying and pursuing strategic public and private partnerships that enable UTARI to flourish. The ED will be called upon to speak and engage as an expert in applied research and impact, conveying a compelling vision for how UTARI can contribute to addressing the most important questions and new areas of inquiry facing industry, the state, and the nation.

Strengthen and expand partnerships to increase UTARI's visibility, impact, and financial success.

The ED will be an inspirational, visible, and respected representative of UTARI, building productive local, regional, and national partnerships, and ensuring the broader engineering community continues to recognize the value of UTARI. It will be crucial that this ED serve in an externally facing capacity and be equipped to understand, navigate, and capitalize on the rich research and engineering community in the surrounding area and beyond. As the external face of UTARI, the ED will be charged with broadcasting UTARI's compelling story to generate engagement and support. The ED must connect with and leverage opportunities for increased and diversified revenue to expand its research that attracts top-tier research staff and pioneering faculty. The ED will continue to engage and work closely with existing community partners in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, surrounding counties, state, and beyond to identify areas of alignment between the priorities of UTARI and the greater engineering research and innovation landscape.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Executive Director role represents an outstanding opportunity for an experienced administrator with a history of innovative leadership. Successful candidates will possess most, if not all, of the following characteristics and credentials:

- A Ph.D. or terminal degree and a record of nationally recognized research and scholarship, eligible for tenure
- Strong leadership and communication skills, with the ability to inspire and motivate researchers
- A proven track record in securing external research funding through grants and partnerships
- Excellent organizational and program management abilities, with a keen attention detail

- Knowledge of current trends and emerging technologies in the field of research
- Ability to foster collaboration and build effective relationships with diverse stakeholders
- Ability to work across disciplinary boundaries and to develop and lead research coalitions including extramural partners
- A deep understanding of the interface of academia and industry
- Capacity and commitment to be a successful fundraiser through building strong relationships with a broad range of constituencies
- Awareness of current and coming changes in the funding and research landscape
- Administrative experience and business acumen
- Excellent interpersonal skills across all stakeholder groups
- Personal and professional integrity in all matters, including commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, compliance with University Policies, and federal, state, and local guidelines

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

The 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 and resume) should be directed in confidence to:

Pam Pezzoli, Partner
Courtney Cabansag, Associate
Kristin Benoit, Associate
Melissa Barravecchio, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-texas-arlington-research-institute-utari/executive-director>

University of Texas, Arlington is an equal employment and a provider of ADA services. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, ethnicity, color, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, disability status, or protected veteran status.