



Associate Vice President for Research Administration  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

## THE SEARCH

The Associate Vice President (AVP) for Research Administration leads university-wide research administration, policy development, and related compliance activities for the University of Minnesota, an AAU, globally engaged, R1 land-grant institution with over \$1B in grants and contracts funded annually. Reporting to the Vice President for Research and Innovation, the AVP leads the Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) team and delivers a customer-centric approach to research administration and leverages data analytics, key tools, and systems to develop innovative solutions to facilitate operational excellence across pre- and post-award processes. The AVP works closely with various offices, departments, and colleges across the entire University of Minnesota system to ensure adherence to federal, state, and institutional standards for research proposals and awards. This individual acts as a policy owner for University-wide research administration policies, including regular updates and comprehensive reviews. They also serve as the institutional approver/signatory for F&A rate agreements, effort compliance, F&A waiver requests, exceptions to financial policy, and other relevant documents. Finally, the AVP provides research administration expertise to the University by serving on key institutional committees, including the Senate Research Committee, Research Security Committee, and Institutional Conflict of Interest Committee, among others.

The University of Minnesota has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquires, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The University of Minnesota is a comprehensive, land-grant public research university ranked among the world's most respected institutions of higher learning. Recognized as a top 10 U.S. public institution by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), UMN has also been ranked first among public universities for interdisciplinary science by Times Higher Education. Several disciplines including biotechnology and medical technology are ranked among the top 10 in the ARWU rankings (public institutions). The university has a distinguished legacy of translating groundbreaking laboratory research into real-world solutions, fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. Since 2006, UMN has launched more than 270 startup companies, making it the leading generator of startups in the State of Minnesota. The University ranks third in the Big Ten for corporate philanthropy, according to the most recent data. The University has scholars of national and international reputation and a strong tradition of education and public engagement. With over 70,000 students enrolled across five campuses located throughout Minnesota—the Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, Crookston, and Rochester—the University advances discovery and innovation to improve society for all. The University is a proud member of the AAU and has the special distinction of being both a globally engaged R1 research institution and Minnesota's land-grant university, creating a unique capacity and responsibility to improve the lives of Minnesotans and drive the state forward.

The University of Minnesota is located within the ancestral and contemporary homelands of the Dakota, the Ojibwe, and numerous other Indigenous peoples. In recognition of this, the University acknowledges the original stewards of the land on which it stands and affirms the importance of honoring those whose land provides the foundation for its educational mission. This acknowledgment is part of a broader commitment to building and strengthening relationships with the 11 sovereign tribal nations of Minnesota. Understanding that acknowledgment alone is insufficient, the University also provides a range of support, resources, and programs designed to enhance access to and success within higher education for American Indian students, staff, faculty, and community members.

The University's [five distinct campuses](#) serve all regions of the state. Each campus has [unique strengths](#), enriched by its surrounding communities. The Chancellors of the greater Minnesota campuses report directly to the President and work in close collaboration with the Provost to achieve systemwide goals. UMN staff and faculty focus on meeting the needs of each student, supporting them through world-class programming, academics, and hands-on experiences. The University's mission and work extends beyond the campuses, as community engagement is a vital part of the University of Minnesota's mission. From community-partnered research and outreach centers and extension offices to community-based field projects, health clinics, and environmental and agricultural projects, UMN faculty, students, and staff are working hand-in-hand with communities throughout Minnesota and the globe.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OFFICE

The Research and Innovation Office (RIO) helps facilitate collaborative research designed to solve our most complex problems. The Research and Innovation Office serves as a central resource for conducting, managing, and sponsoring research at the University of Minnesota and developing and bringing to market UMN innovations that improve people's lives. The University boasts \$1.35 billion in research expenditures, and ranks 12th among US public research institutions in terms of expenditures. With over 14,000 researchers across 300 centers and institutes, the University of Minnesota is associated with 25 Nobel Prize winners and has 51+ National Academy members.

RIO is composed of administrative support units including Sponsored Projects Administration, Technology Commercialization, Research Animal Resources, the Biosafety Level 3 Program, the Research Development Office, Research Integrity and Compliance (including the Institutional Review Board, the Human Research Protection Program, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Program, and the Office of Biotechnology Activities Oversight), External Affairs and Communications, Strategic Initiatives, and the Office of Research Information Systems. RIO oversees key areas of research compliance and administration and help to cultivate a culture of research integrity at the University. RIO also houses 13 interdisciplinary university-wide academic centers and institutes. RIO units are overseen by a senior team of four Associate Vice Presidents ([RIO Organization Chart](#)). The Associate Vice President for Research Administration oversees the Sponsored Projects Administration.

### Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)

The [Office of Sponsored Projects Administration](#) is a University-wide office authorized to submit research proposals and receive awards from external sources on behalf of the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota. SPA is also the fiduciary for the University on grant-related matters.

SPA creates a seamless process throughout the sponsored project lifecycle, with the goals of reducing administrative burden, increasing faculty and staff knowledge, and providing the highest level of support possible in research, creative, and programmatic external funding pursuits. [This team](#) currently consists of a director and 60 staff members.

### RIO Leadership

**Shashank Priya** is the University of Minnesota's Vice President for Research and Innovation, leading a \$1+ billion research enterprise across all campuses. Priya has expanded research infrastructure and launched major initiatives, including the International Institute on Biosensing, Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Innovation Center, Sustainable GeoCommunities, a national security initiative, a systemwide data science program, and a partnership with North Carolina A&T.

Previously, he was Associate VP for Research and a professor at Penn State. He has authored over 500 papers, holds 12 patents, and researches energy conversion, multifunctional materials, energy harvesting, and bio-inspired robotics. He earned degrees from Allahabad University, IISc, and Penn State, and is a recipient of awards including the D.T. Rankin and Richard M. Fulrath Awards.

## ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

Reporting to the Vice President for Research and Innovation and overseeing two direct reports, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will play a key leadership role in overseeing essential teams that support and enhance the University of Minnesota's expanding research enterprise.

### Responsibilities

#### Research Administration Leadership:

- Lead a customer-focused research administration organization of approximately 60+ staff. Provide guidance to the leadership team to effectively manage staff and operations, resulting in strong employee retention, effective budget utilization, and high employee engagement metrics.
- Mentor SPA leadership to provide opportunities to build their professional profiles and networks and participate in regional and federal development activities for research administration.

#### High-Level Visioning and Strategic Planning:

- Develop strategic plans and metrics for University-wide research administration, to facilitate operational excellence across pre- and post-award processes.
- Leverage data analytics to regularly measure operational success in order to drive continuous improvement, equitably allocate workloads, and ensure a high level of customer satisfaction.
- Devise innovative solutions that ensure efficient, high-quality services while managing financial, legal, and reputational risks. Activities include both preemptive activities such as training and standard operating procedures, and reactive responses to quickly handle acute challenges.

#### Education and Outreach:

- Oversee the development of a structured curriculum to increase knowledge of SPA regulatory procedures and functions across the University and create processes for regular curriculum delivery.
- Educate and engage the research community with regular presentations on funding agency policy updates, uniform guidance, and other key topics in research administration.
- Serve as a visible liaison for SPA and the Research & Innovation Office (RIO) by holding regular meetings with system campuses to ensure cross-campus navigation and system consistency.

- Represent RIO on key University committees such as the Senate Research Committee, Research Security Committee, and Institutional Conflict of Interest Committee.
- Represent the University by participating in external groups such as NCURA, COGR, APLU, and AAU.

#### **Policy Management and Compliance Activities:**

- Prepare and manage responses to NIH, agency Offices of the Inspector General, and other notifications requiring official responses, partnering with the Office of General Counsel (OGC) as needed, by all applicable deadlines.
- Monitor agency regulations for reporting requirements and adjust university policies as needed. Provide guidance to the university community based on the assessment of policies.
- Build strong relationships with key state and federal agency officials and serve as an institutional representative for regulatory and compliance partnerships.
- Act as a policy owner for University-wide research administration policies, including regular updates and comprehensive reviews. Ensure consistent implementation and enforcement of policies.
- Serve as institutional approver/signatory for F&A rate agreements, effort compliance, F&A waiver requests, exceptions to financial policy, and other relevant documents, ensuring prompt and efficient responses to requests.
- Work with Human Resources (HR), OGC, Office for Institutional Compliance (OIC), and others for the investigation and management of cases related to fraud, misspending, and other non-scientific misconduct.
- Work closely with OGC to ensure contract terms adequately protect the University and are consistent with law and University policies.
- Work closely with Technology Commercialization to ensure Intellectual Property (IP) terms contained in contracts are consistent with University's IP policies.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

### **Lead and develop a team of high-performing professionals to enhance the support and services of RIO's research administration team.**

Building on the deep expertise within Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA), the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will serve as a strategic leader guiding the future direction of a high-performing team. This is a unique and exciting opportunity to elevate research administration at the University of Minnesota to new levels of excellence. As a committed advocate and organizational leader, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will drive advancements in administrative systems and processes, assess and refine staffing structures, and champion professional development across the unit.

In a research environment that is constantly evolving, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will ensure the team remains agile, forward-looking, and focused on delivering efficient, high-quality support and services that meet the expanding research ambitions of the University. A key responsibility will be evaluating staff capacity in light of growing institutional needs and advocating for the resources necessary to support both operational excellence and strategic growth. Empowering staff through mentorship, continuing education, and career development will be central to building a culture that values expertise and fosters long-term success. The Associate Vice President for Research Administration will skillfully balance innovation with operational integrity, sustaining core responsibilities while advancing new initiatives.

**Collaborate and build relationships with partners across the University of Minnesota and with national partners to advance shared research goals.**

The Research Administration team is a service-oriented unit that supports the research community at the University of Minnesota. This includes deans and associate deans, department chairs, center and institute directors, principal investigators, faculty, students, and administrative staff across the University's various campuses and schools, as well as external stakeholders such as national organizations, federal agencies, and industry partners. The Associate Vice President for Research Administration plays a critical role in cultivating and maintaining strong relationships across these internal and external audiences, fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration, and trust. The Associate Vice President for Research Administration will lead efforts to promote continuous assessment and feedback, ensuring that procedures evolve to meet the dynamic needs of the research enterprise.

In support of these efforts, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will also champion leadership development within the Research Administration team, strengthening its capacity to serve the University's research community through greater transparency, responsiveness, and accessibility.

**Build, nurture, and lead a team of subject experts who continually and tirelessly support the innovative and changing landscape of research.**

The next Associate Vice President for Research Administration will provide agile and visionary leadership to build a future-focused team that is responsive, innovative, and equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of research administration. A strong focus on reflection, process evaluation, and continuous improvement will be essential to ensure compliance with national mandates while meeting the dynamic needs of the University of Minnesota's research community. The Associate Vice President for Research Administration will play a key role in fostering partnerships and building processes to work with industry, foundations, and other external stakeholders to support and accelerate research growth. Staying actively engaged with national organizations and peer institutions will be critical for tracking trends and aligning expectations. This forward-thinking leader will anticipate and address emerging challenges, advancing the university's research mission and supporting the RIO team in achieving strategic goals.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- BA/BS degree, Master's degree preferred.
- At least 10 years of experience in research administration leadership roles with progressively increasing responsibility within a major research university, federal government, or another entity engaged in sponsored research.
- Track record of effectively managing professional staff within a large organization of 25+ individuals.
- Specific experience in administering federal research grants and contracts, corporate-sponsored research, and clinical trial agreements.
- Experience in developing, implementing, and using grants management information systems.
- Ability to handle a high-intensity research administration operation characterized by 10,000+ proposals and agreements annually.
- Demonstrated experience, with specific examples, of leading teams through process and organizational change.
- Proven success in delivering a customer-centric approach to research administration.
- Specific leadership examples demonstrating the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence applications for research administration.
- Experience in designing and delivering an effective training curriculum to a diverse audience across an institution.
- Significant professional experience in serving on and leading university-wide committees in the research administration domain.
- Multiple years of experience in policy development and interpretation, particularly in the domain of federal grant agencies.
- Established track record of working with organizations such as NCURA, COGR, APLU, AAU, and other relevant groups.

## PAY & BENEFITS

**Pay Range:** \$200,000 – 280,000; depending on education/qualifications/experience

**Time Appointment:** 100% Appointment

**Position Type:** P&A Staff

Please visit the [Office of Human Resources](#) website for more information regarding benefits eligibility.

**The University offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes:**

- Competitive wages, paid holidays, and generous time off
- Continuous learning opportunities through professional training and degree-seeking programs supported by the [Regents Tuition Benefit Program](#)
- Low-cost medical, dental, and pharmacy plans
- Healthcare and dependent care flexible spending accounts
- University HSA contributions
- Disability and employer-paid life insurance
- Employee wellbeing program
- Excellent retirement plans with employer contribution
- [Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\)](#) opportunity
- Financial counseling services
- Employee Assistance Program with eight sessions of counseling at no cost
- [Employee Transit Pass](#) with free or reduced rates in the Twin Cities metro area

## ABOUT MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL

The University's flagship Twin Cities campus is in the heart of a dynamic metro area that is a global economic leader, a hub for education and culture, and renowned for its abundant cultural and natural resources. The Minneapolis-St. Paul metro is home to the 4th-largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the country as well as thriving entrepreneurial and small-business sectors. Ranked as one of the country's leading "creative economy" communities, the Twin Cities is renowned for its arts and nonprofit sectors, as well as its many lakes and parks and wealth of recreational and entertainment opportunities. Spanning locations in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Twin Cities Campus is part of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. It is a place that offers strong work-life balance, low cost of living compared to similarly sized metro areas, and high rates of health coverage – in short, a place that ranks highly in quality of life surveys.

## 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: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-minnesota/associate-vice-president-research-administration>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Rebecca Kennedy, Partner (she/her)

Kristin Benoit, Associate (she/her)

Cortnee Bollard, Senior Search Coordinator (they/them)

Isaacson, Miller



*The University of Minnesota and Extension recognize and value the importance of diversity and inclusion in enriching the employment experience of its employees and in supporting the academic mission. The University is committed to attracting and retaining employees with varying identities and backgrounds.*

*The University of Minnesota provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To learn more about diversity at the U: <http://diversity.umn.edu>.*

**Employment Requirements:**

*Any offer of employment is contingent upon the successful completion of a background check. Our presumption is that prospective employees are eligible to work here. Criminal convictions do not automatically disqualify finalists from employment.*