



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

Vice President for Research
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

THE SEARCH

The University of South Florida (USF), among the nation's boldest, fastest-growing, and most dynamic public research universities, seeks an innovative and decisive leader to serve as Vice President for Research (VPR). USF has recently achieved landmark membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU) and has experienced significant growth in its research enterprise and impact over the past decade. USF recently celebrated \$750 million in research funding and seeks to grow to over \$1 billion in the next five years. The VPR will join a remarkable senior team, with a new President at the helm, a deeply skilled Provost steeped in research leadership of the highest order, and a cadre of talented and dedicated Deans and Associate Deans for Research, all committed to USF's continued success in a rapidly changing funding and innovation landscape. The VPR will work collaboratively with these leaders, harness the optimism and creativity of USF's talented faculty, and leverage the opportunity-rich environment of the greater Tampa Bay region to bolster USF Research and define new pathways for USF's growth and primacy for its next era of impact.

USF is currently ranked among the top 50 public universities in the country. It is ranked among the top 20 public universities for granted U.S. Patents by the National Academy of Inventors (NAI), an organization founded at USF in 2010, and whose USF chapter alone has over 600 faculty, staff, student, and alumni members. Its research growth has been fueled by the remarkable diversity of its scholarly enterprise, which spans 14 colleges. This enterprise includes an academic medical center comprising the state of Florida's top-ranked medical college, together with colleges of nursing and public health, among others; a college of engineering with close ties to the robust Department of Defense funding ecosystem of Florida; the new Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing, which aims to serve as critical connective tissue across USF's research ecosystem; a historically impactful college of marine science located at USF's St. Petersburg campus; and an excellent array of physical and natural science, social science, humanities, business, and arts programs, many of which rank in the top 50 nationally. In the last academic year, USF conferred over 700 doctoral degrees across research and professional programs.

The next VPR will join USF at a time of great change and opportunity. The VPR will serve as a strategic thought partner as the new President and Provost seek to transform USF Research, connect the university's academic units in creative ways, and fulfill the most ambitious research goals in USF's history.

In keeping with a strong history of shared governance and excellence, the VPR will balance decisiveness with a consultative approach, leveraging the strengths of USF's leaders and setting a strategic vision to advance USF's emergent and established strengths. As the Chief Research Officer, the VPR will establish themselves as a national figure, actively networking with federal agencies, industry partners, and nonprofit funders to stay abreast of emerging areas of national priority and to center and expand USF's influence in its drive toward greater impact and innovation. They must bring both a strong record of research excellence in their own field and a deep and active curiosity for the breadth of research and scholarship across all disciplines at USF.

USF has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to support the search committee in this important recruitment. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the conclusion of this document.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Founded in 1956, the University of South Florida has rapidly evolved into a global powerhouse that transforms lives through education, research, and innovation. In 2023, USF received a historic invitation to join the Association of American Universities (AAU), a tremendous milestone that formalizes USF's position as a leading research university. USF is designated by the State of Florida as a Preeminent Research University, a metrics-based recognition for excellence in student success, research, innovation, and national rankings, which has further cemented USF's position among the state's strong public and private support ecosystem. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked USF as one of the nation's top 50 public universities for seven consecutive years.

USF is situated in the vibrant Tampa Bay region, a living laboratory of academics, entrepreneurs, and established companies working on health and biotech, environmental tech, cyber tech and national security, transportation innovation, clean energy and sustainability, fintech, smart manufacturing, and the arts and social sciences. These numerous opportunities in a vibrant, growing community, combined with the overall attractiveness of the Tampa Bay area as a place to live, have served as significant differentiators of USF over many years. USF's geographic footprint spans [three dynamic campuses](#) in Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota-Manatee. Together, the campuses serve nearly 50,000 students pursuing undergraduate, graduate, specialist, and professional degrees.

With 82 new U.S. utility patents granted in 2024, USF is 16th among American public research universities, 26th among all American public or private universities, and 38th among all universities worldwide in generating new patents. This ranking places USF as a leader among the more than 1,000 academic institutions generating new, novel, and useful inventions granted intellectual property protection from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

USF plays a significant role in catalyzing growth across the state of Florida, and the breadth and depth of the university's [economic impact](#) can be seen in all aspects of its operations. The university has a total

economic impact of \$9.8 billion and supports 111,246 jobs, underscoring its role as one of the most powerful economic engines locally and throughout the state.

University Leadership

[President Moez Limayem](#) was unanimously approved by the USF Board of Trustees in October 2025 to become the university's ninth president. Dr. Limayem previously served as President of the University of North Florida, and before this was the Lynn Pippenger Dean of USF's own Muma College of Business during a decade of service and growth. Under Dr. Limayem's leadership, UNF saw the largest incoming class of students in its history and raised its largest individual gift. He was named among the Power 100: Tampa Bay's Most Influential Business Leaders of 2022, and was recently inducted into the First Coast Business Hall of Fame. Dr. Limayem holds an undergraduate degree in Computer Science from the University of Tunis and an MBA and PhD in information systems from the University of Minnesota.

[Provost Prasant Mohapatra](#) is a Distinguished University Professor in the Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing, and joined the University of South Florida in 2023. Prior to joining USF, he served as the Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California, Davis, where he was instrumental in leading and achieving the aspiration goal of one billion dollars in annual research awards. He was also a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Computer Science and served in the roles of Department Chair, Dean, Vice Provost, and Associate Chancellor at UC Davis. Dr. Mohapatra received his doctoral degree from Penn State University and is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, India.

USF Research

[USF Research](#) is the central hub and conduit for research excellence across the powerful, multi-campus enterprise. USF is home to scholars at the very top of their fields, including 91 fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 14 National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships, 16 members of the National Academies, and nationally recognized Fulbright scholars. It is designated by the Association for Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University. In 2016, USF was among the first three dozen universities nationwide to be designated as an [NSF I-Corps Site](#), and in 2024, NSF named USF as one of the eight partner institutions in the new [NSF I-Corps Southeastern Region Hub](#).

USF is uniquely positioned to marshal expertise across disciplines and develop organizational structures and capacities to address the state of Florida and the world's most pressing challenges. It is home to a potent and expansive [innovation enterprise](#), which comprises a full spectrum of technology accelerators and incubators; the [Florida High Tech Corridor](#), which coalesces USF, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Florida to generate a global ripple effect to advance the lives of people in this 23-county region; and the [USF Research Foundation](#), an independent, nonprofit corporation that provides a means by which discoveries, inventions, processes, and work products of the USF faculty, staff, and students can be transferred from the university laboratory to benefit the public, and whose funds are used to enhance

research at the university. Institutionally, the university is noted for its creative approaches to cross-pollinating research, embodied by the 2024 establishment of the [Collaborative Research Excellence and Translational Efforts \(CREATE\) Program](#), a novel seed-funding initiative that resulted in the founding of four new interdisciplinary research centers spanning technology and aging, antimicrobial resistance, precision medicine, and AI-generated materials, and coalescing 67 faculty across eight colleges.

The Office of the VPR plays a key role in supporting all disciplines and domains at the university through the oversight of the [USF Research Foundation](#) (on whose board the VPR serves as President and CEO); through its connections to the [Associate Deans for Research](#) across the university; through a broad array of interdisciplinary [research centers and institutes](#); and through [USF Research Park](#) as the centerpiece of USF's innovation enterprise, which sustains more than 4,000 public and private sector jobs and returns more than \$71 million in tax revenue to local, state, and federal coffers. In FY2024, federal funding totaled \$750 million, deriving primarily from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. The university is also home to the [Institute of Applied Engineering \(IAE\)](#), which allows capabilities for classified and CUI activities, and is supported by a DoD Army DEVCOM IDIQ totaling \$85 million.

USF Research is a substantial administrative enterprise, comprising over 200 FTE staff across its functions. The VPR oversees [multiple offices and functions](#) across three campuses, including: Advanced Recognition and Engagement; Comparative Medicine; Compliance, Analytics, Risk and Ethics (CARE); the Florida High Tech Corridor at USF; Health Research Collaborations and Compliance; Information Services; the Research Development Institute; Research Operations; Sponsored Programs; Student Engagement in Research and Innovation (SERI); Technology Transfer; USF Connect (Accelerators and Incubators); the USF Research Foundation; and USF Research Park.

THE ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Reporting directly to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, the VPR leads USF's broad and ambitious research enterprise. An accomplished scholar and deft administrator, the VPR will bring a deep and intimate understanding of and appreciation for the infrastructure and institutional posture necessary to support and advance bold ideas that transform the world.

The VPR is the Provost's and President's partner in articulating a vision for scholarly and operational excellence. They will work closely with other senior leaders, faculty, the Council on Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity, and other shared governance groups to strengthen the office's position, steward resources, define efficient and effective systems for research support, and seed ambitious ideas and collaborations across the university. The VPR will partner with the Senior Associate Vice President for Research in collaborating with the powerhouse [USF Health](#) and strengthening this shared enterprise.

Externally, the VPR serves as President and CEO of the USF Research Foundation and is the major conduit for external collaborations throughout the vibrant and economically diverse Tampa Bay Region. The university's proximity to MacDill Air Force Base—home of the U.S. Special Operations Command

(USSOCOM) and CENTCOM—allows it unique access to major DoD funding streams around some of the most exciting and mission-critical applied research in the nation, as well as workforce development opportunities for USF's students. The VPR will be a vocal champion and ambassador for USF's research enterprise with regional actors and will represent the university in Washington, D.C. and nationally, strengthening its position as a partner of choice for over-the-horizon research opportunities.

Internally, the VPR is the Chief Research Officer. As such, the VPR must ensure that a culture of service, collaboration, compliance, ethics, and efficiency pervades every aspect of research conducted at the university, regardless of domain or discipline, while at the same time steering policies that enable—rather than stifle—creativity and innovation at the institution. They will lead a broad and talented staff to ensure efficient and effective administrative and financial management of a top-tier research enterprise. The VPR will serve as a convener and thought leader for the university's broader research strategy. They will be regarded as a visionary and champion for the university's breadth of research activities, ensuring that the liberal arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and fine and performing arts are valued and supported alongside the STEM fields, and will bring exciting new ideas into institutional conversations around team-based scholarship and cross-disciplinary impact.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Define an expansive vision for research excellence and efficiency that will position USF to meet its ambitions

While USF's research footprint has grown by leaps and bounds, the university's grand ambition to surpass \$1 billion in funding in the next five years necessitates an equally grand vision. The next VPR will help define the university's research footprint for a modern, interconnected era, strengthening the structures that support research, and orienting the research function around a culture of "yes" to enable the highest aspirations of USF's talented faculty and scholar-leaders. USF Research will shift towards being a strategic and nimble force multiplier for scholars across all of USF's domains and disciplines. The VPR will assess the office's talent pipeline to ensure that staff uphold their duties to the highest standards of integrity and compliance while thinking creatively about new opportunities for innovation and impact. The VPR will work with Deans, Associate Deans for Research, and USF Health to create new conduits for cross-pollination of research efforts, expand on the CREATE program, and formulate new models for collaborative research. The VPR will serve as a robust and vocal advocate for the university's research aspirations to external audiences, while tirelessly carrying the message across the university of the importance of collaboration and creativity to its future successes.

Deepen and strengthen connections with external research partners nationally and internationally, in Washington, D.C., and within and across Tampa Bay's considerable innovation ecosystem

The VPR will be a tireless advocate for the pathbreaking scholarship of USF near and far. They will champion the university externally, exploring new areas of research and garnering further support through new federal and industrial partnerships, foundation funding, and collaborations with the Florida

High Tech Corridor, as well as other academic and federal institutions aligned with USF's goals. USF's multi-campus formation, its top-ranked medical enterprise, and its deep connectivity to the national security infrastructure, altogether represent a plethora of future opportunities for translational and restricted or classified research across all fields, at a transformational moment in the national funding landscape. The VPR will carry the message of USF's capacities, creativity, and opportunity before these diverse partners in order to broaden the university's funding base and open further avenues for USF's faculty to acquire new support and push forth new ideas across the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields.

Strengthen the core functionality of the research office to posture it for future expansion and diversification

A major effort of the VPR will be to assess and address USF's internal research infrastructure, in partnership with the Provost, Deans, USF Health, and other key senior leaders across the campus. The VPR will evolve policies regarding intellectual property and Conflict of Interest to better position USF to take advantage of industry and translational opportunities, thereby igniting the university's entrepreneurial strengths. They will assess staffing capacity and create robust systems to train and retain talent, foster creativity and responsiveness, and build a bold, "customer-oriented" team to capitalize on USF's momentum. The VPR will work with the Provost to ensure that the physical infrastructure to support the research goals and ambitions is in place while streamlining review processes, budgeting and accounting, and core functionality across the research administration spectrum.

Encourage, enable, and celebrate scholarly pursuits across all of USF's disciplines

Working with USF's outstanding faculty and senior leaders across USF's campuses and USF Health, the VPR will constantly seek ways to maximize the university's ability to capitalize on large team-science opportunities and reduce barriers and siloes across the institution. USF already has an integrated, powerful Department of Medical Engineering shared between the College of Engineering and USF Health; building further collaborations and stronger integration between and across academic units, research centers, and campuses is of critical need for USF's future. While no VPR can be an expert in all fields, they will bring a deep curiosity about and passion for academic disciplines beyond their own. In doing so, the next VPR will champion a broad definition of research and promote a culture that rewards, incentivizes, and invests in all scholarly and creative activities, regardless of discipline. In telling the story of USF's research excellence to broad audiences, the VPR will be a voice for all disciplines and a driver of innovation and impact in all fields.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will be a distinguished scholar and research leader who embodies the mission, vision, and culture of USF. A doctoral degree and a distinguished record of excellence in scholarship, research management, and external engagement are required. Strong candidates will have some combination of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A visionary and catalyzing leader who exercises superb judgment, evaluates trends, anticipates emerging areas, and defines adaptive and collaborative strategic priorities;
- A proven record of achievement in building, enhancing, and sustaining research infrastructure;
- Demonstrated experience in securing fundamental and translational research funding, particularly for interdisciplinary projects;
- Deep ties to senior leadership in government, business, and industry communities; demonstrated experience in securing major research funding from multiple sources;
- Effective management of a complex organization within a large university or comparable public or private sector research organization;
- A record of leading organizational and cultural change in a complex research environment, and the empathy and presence to nurture an organization through such transformation;
- A noted scholar with the ability and credibility to provide intellectual leadership to USF's broad research community; a champion for programs outside of their domain of expertise, who can inspire and galvanize others around large-scale and multidisciplinary efforts;
- Excellent communication skills to represent the university persuasively and compellingly to a broad range of internal and external audiences, including strong listening skills;
- Knowledge and understanding of the current legislative, regulatory, and public policy environment impacting research.

COMPENSATION

Compensation arrangements are competitive and commensurate with both experience and achievement. Relocation assistance is available. USF offers an inspiring higher education environment and [excellent benefits](#), including medical, dental, vision, retirement, and paid time off.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. Applications, inquiries, and nominations should be submitted confidentially to the search team via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-south-florida/vice-president-research>.

Vijay Saraswat, Partner
Keith Mason, Managing Associate
Elizabeth Arvanitis, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

The State of Florida has a Public Meetings Law and a Public Records Law. All meetings of the Search Committee are publicly announced and conducted. All documents submitted to the Committee are public records. Limited exceptions exist. Please feel free to reach out to Isaacson, Miller with any questions before submitting a formal application. As an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer, the University of South Florida considers all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy or marital status, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or any other category protected by or identified by the University as a protected class.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the University of South Florida. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by our client governs.