



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Vice President for Research and Innovation

The University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE OPPORTUNITY

The University of Minnesota (“the University”—a prestigious, comprehensive, public, land-grant research university—seeks a strategic, collaborative, and dynamic leader to serve as its next Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI). The VPRI will join the University at an exciting moment in time and will help shape its next chapter. Under the leadership of the University’s president, Dr. Rebecca Cunningham, the University recently introduced [Elevate Extraordinary 2030](#), its strategic roadmap. Research and innovation is a vital component of the roadmap as the University deepens its commitment to research, scholarship, and creative activity and further expands its impact locally, nationally, and globally.

The University receives over \$1.4 billion in research funding annually. The National Science Foundation ranks the University 12th among U.S. public research universities, and *US News and World Report* ranks it 23rd among Top Public Schools nationally. The *Times Higher Education* Sustainability Impact Ranking places the University fifth nationally and in the top 10 percent globally. The University of Minnesota ranked first among U.S. public universities in the *Times Higher Education* Interdisciplinary Science Ranking. The University serves the state of Minnesota in multiple areas: its five campuses enroll 68,000 undergraduate and graduate students; its more than 600,000 alumni (62 percent of whom live in Minnesota) contribute to the state’s economy; its healthcare enterprise serves over 1.3 million patients annually in hospitals and clinics across the state; and its extension programs provide solutions, practical education, and training for all Minnesotans. The University of Minnesota is home to 4,926 faculty and over 23,000 non-academic staff. Among its faculty, the University currently boasts 26 Nobel Prize recipients, members of the National Academies, and recipients of prestigious awards such as Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellowships, among others.

Reporting directly to the President, the VPRI serves as the University’s chief research officer across the system. The University of Minnesota seeks a VPRI with tested strategic leadership and vision to elevate an already robust research enterprise and drive it to its next level of impact. The VPRI supports the University community and its mission by fostering a culture of quality, high-impact, multidisciplinary research and scholarship; setting a broad, ethical, and inclusive vision for the research enterprise; aligning the Research and Innovation Office around a shared vision; promoting faculty and student scholarship; allocating resources strategically; and expanding funding relationships with industry, foundation,

institutional, and government (state and federal) partners. They will address critical operational challenges to maintain the superior research infrastructure necessary for seamlessly supporting the high volume of cutting-edge grant-active faculty, including professional development for research support staff, modernizing the infrastructure for grant submission, financial management, and human and animal subjects and safety, streamlining compliance systems, and developing relevant policies and procedures.

The successful candidate will have a strong record of securing external funding for their own research program and will be qualified for a faculty appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure. They will be an energetic champion of the University's values and mission, an excellent communicator with different constituencies, and an experienced University administrator, to effectively manage the vast research enterprise across the University's campuses.

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

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

[The University of Minnesota](#) is a comprehensive, public, land-grant research university ranked among the world's most respected institutions of higher learning. The University has scholars of national and international reputation and a strong tradition of education and public engagement. With [five campuses](#) located throughout Minnesota—in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, Crookston, and Rochester—the University of Minnesota advances discovery and innovation to improve society for all. The University is a proud member of the Association of American Universities 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.

At the heart of the University are its faculty, staff, and students. The more than 4,000 faculty members are considered some of the best in their respective fields. The University of Minnesota currently boasts 26 Nobel Prize-winning faculty, recipients of prestigious awards such as Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellowships, and many members of the National Academies and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The University staff are known for their dedication to the institution and its community. The more than 68,000 students come to the University of Minnesota from all 50 states and 148 countries.

A major research university of exceptional breadth and depth with expansive interdisciplinary opportunities, the Twin Cities campus advances education, research, and outreach across [17 schools and colleges](#). The University is one of the few land-grant research universities positioned in a vibrant metropolitan city with over 25 Fortune 500 companies. It has consistently advanced its land-grant mission with exceptional vigor and is distinguished by a comprehensive commitment to integrating public engagement deeply into teaching and learning, research, and discovery.

The University trains over 70 percent of Minnesota's health professionals, and medical and health sciences research accounts for over \$570 million, or 54% of total awards, in externally funded research annually. [University of Minnesota Health Sciences](#) unites education and research across six schools and [patient care](#) across the state. The University recently renegotiated a new 10 year relationship agreement with its partner health system, which will offer additional opportunities to expand medical and health sciences education.

[Public engagement](#) is a vital part of the University's mission, and its work extends beyond its campuses. From community-partnered research and outreach centers and extension offices to community-based field projects, health clinics, and environmental and agricultural projects, University faculty, students, and staff work hand-in-hand with communities throughout Minnesota and around the world.

The University has an annual operating budget of \$5.1 billion structured in a responsibility-centered management (RCM) budget model and generates an estimated economic impact of \$11.5 billion for the Minnesota economy. It is the state's seventh-largest employer and encompasses [extension initiatives](#), research and outreach centers, clinics, labs, professional education, and K-12 educational programs throughout the state, as well as world-class performing arts facilities, museums, and galleries.

Flagship campus in 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 region 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, it is a place that ranks highly in quality-of-life surveys.

University Leadership

[President Rebecca Cunningham](#) joined the University on July 1, 2024. As President, Dr. Cunningham works closely with the University of Minnesota community and Minnesotans broadly to design and implement a bold new vision that effectively positions the five campuses for continuous success. She is focused on prioritizing an accessible, world-class education for students and advancing the University's powerful mission to enhance the health, safety, and prosperity of people across the state, nation, and world. Before joining the University of Minnesota, Dr. Cunningham served as the Vice President for Research and Innovation at the University of Michigan, where she was responsible for expanding its annual research portfolio to a record \$2 billion. She holds a bachelor's degree from Fairfield University and a medical

doctorate from Jefferson Medical College, and she completed her residency in emergency medicine at the University of Michigan.

[Executive Vice President and Provost Gretchen Ritter](#) joined the University on July 31, 2025. Dr. Ritter is the chief academic officer for the University's five campuses and provost for the Twin Cities campus. She leads the deans of the colleges, schools, and academic units of the Twin Cities campus and is responsible for advancing its academic mission. She is responsible for faculty promotion and tenure approval, as well as the development and management of academic programs to bolster faculty, student, and staff success. Prior to joining the University of Minnesota, Dr. Ritter served as the vice president for civic engagement and education at Syracuse University, before which she served as the institution's vice chancellor, provost, and chief academic officer. She holds a doctorate in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a bachelor of arts from Cornell University.

[The Board of Regents](#), established in 1851 at the founding of the University of Minnesota, is the University's governing board. Regents articulate a vision for the University and work to ensure it fulfills its mission of education, research, and outreach for the benefit of the people of Minnesota, the nation, and the world. There are 12 Regents who each serve six-year terms and are elected by the Minnesota legislature. There is one Regent from each of the state's eight congressional districts, as well as four additional Regents from the state at large.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Research at the University of Minnesota combines the power of extensive and collaborative research disciplines and proven market expertise to create innovations that benefit society. The University reports over [\\$1.4 billion in annual research expenditures](#), ranking 12th among public universities in the United States according to the most recent NSF Higher Education Research Development (HERD) survey. In FY24, the University of Minnesota received 59.4 percent of its sponsored research funding directly from federal sources. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the University's largest single federal funding source, totaling \$356 million. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is the second largest federal sponsor of University research, totaling \$83.2 million. From FY20 to FY24, the University's awards have grown by 20.1%, including a 25.0% increase in the number of high-dollar awards.

The [Research and Innovation Office \(RIO\)](#) helps to facilitate collaborative research designed to address the world's most complex problems, while operating as a central resource for conducting, managing, and sponsoring research and developing and bringing to market University of Minnesota innovations that improve people's lives. The mission of RIO prioritizes four key areas: [Ethics, Integrity, Safety, and Compliance](#); [Research and Innovation Capacity](#); [Research Services and Infrastructure](#); and [Partnership and Engagement](#).

To advance this mission, RIO comprises [administrative support units](#), [interdisciplinary academic centers and institutes](#), key [regulatory bodies](#), and [additional resources and supports](#) including the [Research Development Office](#), [Research Advancement & Development Professionals Network](#), [Minnesota's](#)

[Discovery, Research and Innovation Economy](#), [Natural Resources Research Institute](#), and [Research Computing](#). In addition, the University has more than 300 [research, education, and outreach centers and institutes](#) that encourage collaboration among disciplines and partner with other institutions and community programs, as well as a broad range of [labs and core facilities](#) that provide support for research in a wide range of fields and disciplines. The University's state-of-the-art research infrastructure helps to attract top talent to the University and enables faculty, staff, and students to pursue research inquiries at the cutting edge of knowledge.

The University's [technology commercialization](#) work has been recognized for its excellence in several national and global rankings, including *World's Most Innovative Universities* (Reuters) where the University of Minnesota ranked 22nd globally and 2nd among Big Ten public institutions; and *Universities Granted U.S. Utility Patents* (National Academy of Inventors) where the University ranked 16th globally and 4th among Big Ten public institutions. The University is the largest single source of startups in Minnesota, having launched 26 startups in FY25 and spun out 300 startups since the formation of the [Venture Center](#) within the University of Minnesota's Technology Commercialization in 2006. 69 percent of these startups are still active or acquired today, and 74 percent are based in Minnesota.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Reporting directly to the President and serving on the President's Cabinet, the Vice President for Research and Innovation serves as the Chief Research Officer of the University. As such, the VPRI is responsible for leading all functions of the University's research and innovation enterprise, strengthening the infrastructure that undergirds the enterprise, managing the staff and programs in the Research and Innovation Office, partnering across the institution to bolster research activity, and strengthening external relationships for the benefit of research and translation. Both at the University and beyond, the VPRI will be the chief ambassador for research across all disciplines, galvanizing faculty, staff, students, federal agencies, corporate sponsors, and other external partners toward a bold and exciting vision for research as laid out in the University's new strategic plan, [Elevate Extraordinary 2030](#).

The VPRI leads a division of 63 people and manages a total budget of \$202.5M. This person partners closely with the President, Provost, and other senior leaders to set and advance the research and innovation strategy, and receives guidance from several [advisory and oversight committees](#) on a range of issues related to research including funding, policies, ethical practices, and collaboration. [Reporting directly to the VPRI](#) are the leaders of: Research Capacity Building, Technology Commercialization, Research Administration, Integrity and Compliance, External Affairs & Communications, Statewide Initiatives, Finance, and the RIO research centers and institutes, as well as the RIO Chief Operating Officer and the Attending Veterinarian.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Building upon a strong foundation at one of the nation's premier public research institutions, the VPRI will address the following challenges and strive to use them as opportunities to strengthen the University's research enterprise:

Advance a comprehensive vision for the University's research and innovation ecosystem

The University recently launched an ambitious new [strategic plan](#) to strengthen its position as an engine of growth, knowledge, and progress. Reflecting the University of Minnesota's position as one of the nation's top public research institutions, research and innovation are integral facets of the plan. Aligning with the broad contours of this plan, and working in close partnerships with key senior leaders, faculty, and staff, the VPRI will articulate and advance a comprehensive vision for research and innovation growth at the University. This vision will be inclusive and comprehensive, leveraging the established excellence of the University of Minnesota's research portfolio, engaging the full breadth of disciplines that exist at the University, accounting for the strengths of the University's five campuses, and aligning with broader public priorities.

Strengthen the infrastructure that undergirds research activity

As the University's research enterprise expands, RIO must address the challenges of growth while positioning itself for future leaps. The VPRI must understand the value and challenges of supporting world-class scholars while meeting the complex regulatory requirements of a research university, particularly one with the incredible breadth of the University of Minnesota, including several medical and health science schools as well as hospitals and clinics. The VPRI will lead efforts to build a culture of excellent customer service, collaboration, and attention to compliance to ensure that faculty are supported in scholarly endeavors across all disciplines. To this end, the VPRI will enhance the structures and technology integration that underpin the management of research activity, including procurement, compliance, pre- and post-award support, technology transfer, licensing policies, and financial management and reporting, ensuring that the University remains competitive and responsive to funding opportunities as they emerge.

Streamline operational efforts and support professional development for the RIO staff

The VPRI will inherit a dedicated team of faculty and staff with a wide array of expertise and functional strengths. Given the breadth and scope of the research enterprise at the University of Minnesota, professional staff tend to be compartmentalized, and operational efforts are not always consistent. The VPRI will bring a fresh perspective to these operational practices, identifying opportunities to streamline efforts and reduce redundancies where possible. As part of this work, the VPRI will enhance professional development for the staff who support the research enterprise. More broadly, the VPRI will convene RIO staff across institutional boundaries, ensuring the team is aligned around a common vision and working cohesively to support scholarly activity.

Encourage and incentivize creative activity that transcends disciplinary and campus boundaries

The VPRI will establish pathways for collaborative scholarship and creative activity. As a leader within a comprehensive research university, the VPRI will proactively broadcast the opportunities available across disciplines, including the arts, social sciences, humanities, engineering, and life and medical sciences, as well as the impact of scholarly and entrepreneurial activity on the lives of people in Minnesota and around the world. Working closely with the Associate Deans for Research, leaders of research centers and institutes, and other key partners, the VPRI will align incentives, dismantle disincentives, strengthen coordination, bolster cross-disciplinary units, and foster a culture of collaboration that connects research strengths across disciplines and campuses. They will champion innovation and entrepreneurship as integral parts of the research portfolio, supporting programs that translate discovery into application and commercialization.

Partner with other key leaders to assess the University's budgetary and financial structures

With a new President and Provost at the University, and with immense change happening in the federal research funding landscape, now is a prime opportunity for the VPRI to bring a fresh perspective to the financial structures underpinning research support. The VPRI will work closely with other senior leaders to assess the institution's financial policies and the impact further governmental changes will have on research funding. Looking to the future, the VPRI will help to set priorities for resource allocation and will contribute to a budgetary model that incentivizes and supports world-class research.

Expand the University's engagement with federal and state funding agencies, industry partners, and regional collaborators

As a vocal champion of the University's research enterprise in the state of Minnesota and in Washington, D.C., the VPRI will elevate the University of Minnesota's institutional visibility and competitiveness in areas of local, national, and global significance. They will bring the strategic insight, presence, and networks needed to position the University for major opportunities, while also developing new relationships that further strengthen the University's research engine. In collaboration with senior leaders across the University, the VPRI will streamline processes that allow faculty to act nimbly, pursue complex multi-partner projects, and secure funding from corporate, philanthropic, and governmental sources.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be a distinguished scholar and visionary leader who embodies the University of Minnesota's commitments to excellence, innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration. This person will bring a proven track record of advancing transformative research and a documented ability to build dynamic partnerships across academia, government, industry, and the broader community. The VPRI must have an earned doctorate or equivalent terminal degree with an outstanding record in research and education commensurate with the appointment of full professor with tenure at the University of Minnesota.

While no individual candidate is likely to embody all the desired qualifications, skills, and experience, the successful candidate will possess many of the following:

- A commitment to the scholarly, educational, service, and land-grant missions of the University of Minnesota;
- A collegial, accessible, transparent, and consultative academic administrator with absolute integrity and ethics; experience with data-informed decision-making at a complex institution;
- A record of leading organizational and cultural change in a complex research environment, and the empathy and presence to support an organization through such transformation;
- Demonstrated ability to strengthen research infrastructure and lead the development of organizational processes and policies that support a high-performing research organization;
- A global and interdisciplinary thinker able to harness and facilitate the potential for collaborative activities across schools, campuses, and disciplinary boundaries;
- An astute understanding of university finances; the ability to allocate resources strategically;
- A demonstrated record of success with federal grant funding;
- Experience supporting technology transfer, commercialization, and industry partnerships;
- Successful experience in an academic administrative and leadership role with demonstrated skills to manage the scope, scale, and complexity similar to the University of Minnesota;
- A strategic mindset combined with the ability to work effectively with senior leadership, along with faculty and staff, in executing ambitious goals;
- A superb communicator and enthusiastic advocate for the University's scholarly mission, for its faculty, staff, and students, and for their pursuits in research and innovation;
- Outstanding emotional intelligence, relationship building, listening, and communication skills;
- Deep ties to leadership in business, government, and industry; demonstrated experience in securing major research funding from multiple sources;
- The ability to provide intellectual leadership to the University's full research community; a champion for disciplines outside of their own expertise; an interest in the full breadth of disciplines at the University of Minnesota.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Vice President for Research and Innovation is a 100-percent-time, 12-month, professional and administrative (P&A) appointment based in Minneapolis. Salary is commensurate with education and experience, with an anticipated salary range of \$475,000 - \$515,000.

The University of Minnesota offers excellent benefits. Please visit the [Office of Human Resources](#) website for more information regarding benefit eligibility.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Applications (including CV and cover letter), inquiries, and nominations should be submitted in confidence to Rebecca Kennedy, Dan Rodas, Keith Mason, Stephen Kalogeras, and Cortnee Bolland via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-minnesota/vice-president-research-and-innovation>.

University of Minnesota Equal Opportunity Statement: *The University of Minnesota shall provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, familial status, disability, public assistance status, membership or activity in a local commission created for the purpose of dealing with discrimination, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.*

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the University of Minnesota. 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 the University of Minnesota would supersede any conflicting information in this document.