



Search for Director, Turkana Basin Institute
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, New York

SEARCH SUMMARY

The Turkana Basin Institute (TBI) and Stony Brook University (SBU) seek an experienced leader and accomplished scientist who will continue to grow TBI's research infrastructure, ensure its continued pre-eminence in the paleosciences, and the further expansion of its broad regional education activities. Leveraging its partnership with Kenyan officials and communities, along with philanthropic funding, SBU has supported TBI in becoming an internationally recognized research and educational field station. TBI is a core element of Stony Brook University's international footprint, and the next Director will have the opportunity to lead an institute rich in history and scientific accomplishments.

Founded in 2005 by Richard Leakey, TBI is located in the Turkana Basin of Kenya, the ideal location for conducting research in the paleosciences and early human history more broadly. The Turkana Basin region is a source of unprecedented paleontological and archaeological evidence for all major stages of human evolution and cultural change. From its early beginnings, TBI has sought to build infrastructure to support year-round field research. As part of establishing permanent infrastructure for research, TBI has collaborated closely with local communities and county officials, and nearby universities to train and develop the next generation of African scholars and researchers, and build local capacity in other meaningful ways. The TBI facilities at Ileret and Turkwel are the main locations that house its laboratories, support facilities, and classrooms. TBI's field programs, including the Origins Field School, provide on-site experiences for undergraduate and graduate students interested in the paleosciences, human-environment relationships, and sustainable development in the global south.

Reporting to the Provost of Stony Brook University, the Director serves as TBI's chief administrative officer, scientific thought leader, lead fundraiser, and relationship manager. The Director oversees all of TBI's activities across its various locations and works closely with the CEO of TBI Kenya to ensure that onsite operations and infrastructure run smoothly. The success of the next Director will be determined by their ability to build and enhance TBI's research and education programs; fundraise; maintain strong collaborations with Stony Brook University and Kenyan stakeholders; and mentor and develop the next generation of African paleoscience researchers. The Director should bring strong scientific credentials;

experience with field work in international settings; the ability to communicate scientific research to broad audiences; and the acumen to work with a diverse array of stakeholders in the U.S. and abroad.

Stony Brook University has retained the search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist with this recruitment. Instructions for applying, nominating, and/or inquiring about the position can be found at the end of this document.

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1957 and a member of the Association of American Universities since 2001, Stony Brook is a nationally and internationally renowned research-intensive university. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Stony Brook as the #1 public university in New York and the #26 best public university in the country. Its mission is to advance student learning by offering high-quality, academically rigorous programs of instruction; support an outstanding faculty in their teaching and scholarship; and to address local, regional and state needs and goals while providing public service to the citizens of New York State. In fall 2025, Stony Brook enrolled 27,200 students (18,616 undergraduate students and 8,584 graduate and professional students), including 3,991 international students from over 150 countries. In 2022, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul designated Stony Brook University as one of two flagship universities in the SUNY system, reflecting the pre-eminent role the university plays, nationally and internationally, as a model of research innovation, academic excellence, and community engagement.

Stony Brook's 1,452-acre campus (the largest in the SUNY system) on Long Island's North Shore encompasses 12 schools and colleges, a wide array of centers and institutes, Stony Brook Medicine (which includes the Stony Brook University Hospital and Health Sciences Center), and an 8,300-seat stadium and sports complex. Additional locations include Stony Brook's Southampton campus on Long Island's East End, healthcare sites throughout Suffolk County, and a presence in Manhattan as well as sites across the globe.

Stony Brook is a key player in furthering economic development on Long Island and is part of the management team of nearby Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL), a U.S. Department of Energy facility. Stony Brook maintains more than 75 joint appointments with Brookhaven that enable researchers to develop collaborations, access facilities, mentor students, and, in some cases, participate in teaching. Stony Brook also maintains close partnerships with the world-renowned Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory to promote excellence in research and graduate student training.

As the University has risen in the rankings and increased its research expenditures, it has maintained its commitment as an incubator of social mobility. As a public institution, Stony Brook admits students from all walks of life and socioeconomic backgrounds and provides a high-caliber and affordable education. More than 40% of Stony Brook undergraduates are Pell-eligible, and more than a third are first-generation students. The University has invested in staff and programs that provide support to students throughout their academic careers and to ensure their future success after graduation.

Current Leadership

Andrea Goldsmith currently serves at Stony Brook's seventh president since 2025. Previously, she served as the dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science at Princeton University. Dr. Goldsmith is a distinguished researcher, educator, and entrepreneur with extensive experience in academia and industry. She holds bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees in electrical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Goldsmith's career spans over two decades at Stanford University, where she has held various academic leadership positions. She is known for her staunch support of women in science and engineering and has served on multiple corporate boards.

Carl Lejuez was appointed Executive Vice President and Provost in July 2022. Prior to Stony Brook, Provost Lejuez served as the Provost at the University of Connecticut. As a first-generation college student, Provost Lejuez is a stalwart supporter of Stony Brook's mission, students, staff, and faculty. He received his PhD in clinical psychology from West Virginia University and completed his clinical training at the Brown University Clinical Training Consortium. His areas of interest and research include the development of behavioral mental health interventions to address a wide range of psychological conditions including mood disorders, addictions, and personality disorders for marginalized and underserved populations.

TURKANA BASIN INSTITUTE (TBI)

The Turkana Basin Institute was born from Richard Leakey's conviction that the Turkana Basin is the single most complete window into the entire span of human evolution on Earth — from Cretaceous dinosaurs through to the earliest pastoralists — and that this extraordinary resource deserved a professionally staffed and year-round research infrastructure rather than the episodic expedition model that had persisted in the field for decades. Since 2005, SBU has supported TBI in cementing its reputation as a cornerstone in pioneering important research into early human history.

Since its founding, TBI has maintained a focus on empowering and training the next generation of African scientists and building durable ties to the communities in which it conducts research. TBI works closely with the National Museums of Kenya on fossil curation, specimen security, and shared scientific authority. Through its research and graduate programs and sophisticated operational infrastructure in Kenya, TBI breaks from the extractive model of scientific discovery. It sees the training of an emerging cohort of experts and employment of Kenyan personnel as integral to its mission.

In Kenya, TBI's facilities are run by a Kenyan LLC that oversees day-to-day management of onsite activities. Currently, TBI has two field centers, one on either side of Lake Turkana: TBI-Ileret on the east side and TBI-Turkwel on the west. The facilities provide food, accommodations, and critical logistics for scientists, students, and permanent staff. The centers also contain a range of laboratories, fossil preparation, storage facilities, and classrooms to support all aspects of research and learning. Activities at both facilities are supported by an administrative office located in the Karen suburb of Nairobi. TBI also runs a robust field program that offers a full-semester experience in Kenya. At the Origins Field School, students can earn 15 upper-division Stony Brook credits studying in the very place where the Leakey family and their colleagues

have made, and continue to make, unprecedented discoveries in the field of human prehistory. TBI's educational programs are a highly successful model for international student engagement, reaching nearly 500 students and scholars over the past five years.

Stony Brook also serves as the academic home for many of the faculty, students, and postdoctoral researchers across multiple departments who center their work at TBI. For nearly three decades, Stony Brook has been an international center of excellence in research and training in paleontology and paleoanthropology, specifically in the areas of primate and human evolution. In recent years, TBI and Stony Brook have also developed growing strengths in paleoecology and environmental-change research. As one of Stony Brook's centers and institutes, TBI affords graduate students and postdoctoral researchers across multiple departments access to field research, collaborative mentoring, and graduate coursework in geology, ecology and evolution, archaeology, and human evolution. Stony Brook additionally facilitates lecture series, symposia, outreach, and fundraising activities that expand connections to and support for TBI's work across the globe.

The institute's mission is supported by two important boards. The TBI International Advisory Board (TBI-IAB) is composed of prominent philanthropists, scientists, and other supporters from around the globe that meets to share ideas on how best to advance the mission of TBI. The board also plays a role in fundraising efforts for TBI through its own generous contributions. The second group, the TBI Kenya Board, includes leaders from academia, business, and government and has fiduciary responsibilities over the LLC that manages TBI's Kenya operations.

At Stony Brook, TBI employs a staff of seven and has an operating budget of approximately \$1.1 million. In Kenya, TBI employs 145 staff and had an operating budget of nearly \$3.2 million in 2025. Currently, TBI has about 150 affiliated researchers from institutions across the United States and the world.

THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

The primary role of the Director is to advance the research and educational mission of the Turkana Basin Institute and ensure the smooth operations of the institute at Stony Brook University and in Kenya. At Stony Brook, an Associate Director and Administrator report to the Director as key partners in managing relationships and operations with university stakeholders. The Director of TBI reports to the Provost of Stony Brook University and consults closely with TBI's International Advisory Board and the Kenya Board. The Director of TBI works in close collaboration with the CEO of TBI Kenya to ensure that the institute's operations effectively support its broader mission.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The success of the next Director will be determined by how well they address the following opportunities and challenges:

Advance TBI as a deeply committed, forward-looking leader in the field of paleosciences

A key task for the Director will be in maintaining TBI's leadership as the premier institution for research and education in the paleosciences and paleoanthropology. Historically, research conducted at TBI has resulted in numerous scholarly papers that have defined their respective fields. Of the paleoscience and paleoanthropology research institutions throughout the world, and especially in East Africa, TBI possesses an unparalleled set of resources and capabilities.

The Director will continue to enhance TBI's core strengths and help initiate new areas of multidisciplinary research that complement, enrich, and expand the work of the institute. Recruiting the best and most promising researchers in relevant fields will also be an important task of the Director. They will work in collaboration with Stony Brook University and other academic institutions to encourage researchers to connect their work with TBI's initiatives. TBI's field education programs play a critical role in introducing undergraduate and graduate students to the broader field of early human history. The Director must bring an innovative approach to sustaining and expanding field programs in consultation with Stony Brook faculty.

Serve as an effective fundraiser

The TBI Director will have a clear commitment to fundraising to help ensure that the institute has the necessary resources to fulfill its mission. Successful fundraising will hinge on how effectively they convey the importance and excitement of TBI's work to a broad audience. TBI is currently seeking to establish a \$30 million endowment, and the Director will focus much of their fundraising towards that effort. Over the years, TBI has received great support from the Stony Brook Foundation and the university's advancement team, and the Director will work closely with them on fundraising opportunities. TBI's International Advisory Board also serves as an important partner in meeting the institute's development needs, and the Director should continue to cultivate its support. TBI seeks a director who will be comfortable fundraising from multiple sources to ensure a diversified resource base.

Maintain TBI's core commitment to raising the next generation of African researchers

Since its inception, TBI has looked to train and develop the next generation of indigenous African researchers who can contribute to furthering our understanding of early human history. This commitment has made TBI unique amongst research institutes, and the Director must maintain it. The Director will play an important role in developing the programs and support systems that help promising scholars and researchers at the early stages of their careers. They should help foster an environment that enables African researchers to build meaningful and thriving careers in their home continent.

Continue to build and strengthen relationships across TBI's key stakeholders

The Director of TBI plays a pivotal role in maintaining and bolstering the institute's relationships across Stony Brook University and partners in Kenya. The Director works closely with the relevant University leaders and faculty on research initiatives, academic programs, and hiring. They should be a strong promoter and advocate for TBI's research and academic programs to the broader Stony Brook community. In Kenya, national and county officials, leaders of local communities in the Turkana Basin, and representatives from scientific regulatory bodies such as the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation are important stakeholders the Director must maintain constructive relationships with. Similarly, the Director must work with leaders of the National Museums of Kenya, a unique institutional partner, as TBI expands its physical infrastructure and human capacity to curate emerging finds from the basin and safeguard heritage. In these efforts, the Director will collaborate with the CEO of TBI-Kenya.

The sustaining of the Turkana Basin Institute would not be possible without the talent and dedicated hard work of its staff in Kenya. All key operational and logistical details that allow for sophisticated research and high-caliber academic programs happen because of the knowledge and experience of the Kenya-based staff. While the Director does not have responsibility for day-to-day management of the TBI-Kenya staff, they must be a consistent presence so that there is mutual alignment on overall goals and the means to achieve them.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The search committee seeks candidates who bring most, if not all, of the following qualifications:

- A strong scholarly and research record in one or more of the broad fields relevant to TBI's mission, including early human history, paleoanthropology, paleobiology, drylands ecology and environmental change, and/or the geosciences;
- Credentials and achievements that merit appointment as a tenured professor at Stony Brook University;
- The ability to successfully fundraise from diverse sources (e.g., government, corporate, and private philanthropy);
- Ability to recruit and retain exceptional and promising scholars and researchers;
- Substantial experience with fieldwork involving complex logistics in remote locations of Africa;
- Familiarity with the rules and regulations governing scientific research in Africa and/or globally;
- Successful record and passion for mentoring the next generation of researchers;

- A strong ability to build and manage relationships and work with a diverse array of stakeholders from university leadership to international partners;
- Experience leading teams and complex operations, ideally in international settings;
- Strong communication skills and the ability to convey scientific research to broad audiences; and
- Experience with devising academic programs for the current generation of students.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Director of the Turkana Basin Institute will be located at Stony Brook University and is expected to make frequent visits to Kenya and the Turkana Basin Institute sites in Nairobi, Ileret, and Turkwel. The salary will be competitive and commensurate with a candidate's experience. As needed, the University will also provide visa support.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search. All applicants must submit a statement of interest and CV. Applications, inquiries, and nominations should be sent via the website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/stony-brook-university-turkana-basin-institute/director>. Please address all correspondence to the Isaacson, Miller representatives below:

Sean Farrell, Partner
Kahn Lee, Managing Associate
Drew Chang, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Stony Brook University is committed to excellence in diversity and the creation of inclusive learning, and working environment. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status and all other protected classes under federal or state laws.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Stony Brook University and the Turkana Basin Institute. 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 Stony Brook University and the Turkana Basin Institute would supersede any conflicting information in this document.