



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Senior Associate Vice President for Research Development and Strategy

The University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE SEARCH

The University of Minnesota (“the University”)—a prestigious, comprehensive, public, land-grant research university—seeks an innovative, strategic research leader to serve as the Senior Associate Vice President for Research Development and Strategy (SAVPRDS). This is an exciting moment for the University as the SAVPRDS will report to the newly appointed Vice President for Research and Innovation, Cynthia Carnes. Under the leadership of the University’s president, Dr. Rebecca Cunningham, the University recently introduced [Elevate Extraordinary 2030](#), its strategic roadmap. Research and innovation are 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 inaugural *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 Vice President for Research and Innovation, the SAVPRDS will work at the University and beyond as an ambassador, building research across all disciplines, galvanizing faculty, staff, students, federal agencies, corporate sponsors, and other external partners. They will also serve as the institution's senior strategist for monitoring, interpreting, and responding to shifts in the federal research funding environment, including changes in agency priorities, congressional appropriations, and executive policy.

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.

THE 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.

Research Leadership

[Dr. Cynthia Carnes](#), a nationally recognized research leader and university administrator, will join the University of Minnesota as Vice President Research and Innovation on July 31, 2026. As VPRI Dr. Carnes will lead efforts to sustain and strengthen the University's research enterprise, enhance operations and interdisciplinary collaboration, and expand partnerships across industry, government and communities statewide. Dr. Carnes will be joining the University of Minnesota from The Ohio State's Enterprise for Research, Innovation and Knowledge (ERIK) where she served as senior associate vice president for research operations since 2022.

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 SAVP FOR RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY

Reporting directly to the Vice President for Research and Innovation, the Senior Associate Vice President for Research Development and Strategy is responsible for partnering across the institution to bolster research activity, and help the University anticipate, identify, and cultivate emerging research ecosystems externally for the benefit of research and translational impact. At the University and beyond, the SAVPRDS will be an ambassador for building 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 SAVPRDS portfolio will include the Research Development Office and work in close partnership with existing research development leadership and infrastructure to identify emerging opportunities, cultivate high-value external relationships, inform institutional strategy, and position the University for major initiatives.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Building upon a strong foundation at one of the nation's premier public research institutions, the SAVPRDS will address the following challenges and 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 SAVPRDS will support the VPR in articulating and advancing 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, incorporating the strengths of the University's five campuses, and aligning with broader public priorities.

Advance forecasting of federal changes in research to ensure stability and resilience for the institution's research enterprise

The Senior Associate Vice President for Research Development and Strategy will serve as the institution's senior strategist for monitoring, interpreting, and responding to shifts in the federal research funding environment, including changes in agency priorities, congressional appropriations, and executive policy. They will cultivate ongoing intelligence relationships with federal program officers, agency leadership, congressional staff, and peer institution counterparts to ensure the university maintains early visibility into emerging opportunities and lead institutional scenario planning efforts that assess the potential impact of federal landscape shifts on the university's research portfolio, while identifying proactive strategies to sustain momentum and growth. They will develop and advance a diversified funding strategy that strengthens the university's research base across federal, private foundation, industry, philanthropic, and state sources — ensuring the long-term resilience and growth of the research enterprise. They will communicate complex federal policy developments clearly and constructively to university leadership, faculty, and stakeholders, translating uncertainty into informed, confident institutional action and planning.

Encourage creative activity that transcends disciplinary and campus boundaries

The SAVPRDS will help align incentives, strengthen coordination, bolster cross-disciplinary units, and foster a culture of collaboration that connects researchers effectively across disciplines and multiple campuses. They will champion innovation, entrepreneurship, and translational impact as integral parts of the research portfolio. This includes supporting programs and partnerships that translate discoveries application, commercialization, public benefit, and broader societal impact.

External Partnerships & Advocacy

In collaboration with the VPRI, the SAVPRDS will act as a vocal champion of the University's research enterprise in the state of Minnesota, Washington, D.C., and beyond, working to elevate the University of Minnesota's institutional visibility and competitiveness in areas of local, national, and global significance. They will bring strategic insight, presence, and networks needed to position the University for major research funding opportunities, corporate and government agency partnerships, foundation and community organization engagement, multi-institutional collaborations, and other opportunities aligned with the University's research strengths, while also developing new relationships that further strengthen the University's research enterprise. With other senior leaders and the VPRI, the SAVP will support processes allowing investigators to act nimbly, pursue complex multi-partner projects, and secure funding from governmental, corporate, philanthropic, foundation, and other external sources.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be a distinguished research administrator and 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. 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 research administrator with absolute integrity and ethics; experience with data-informed decision-making at a complex institution;
- A record of leading in a complex research environment, convening diverse partners around shared challenges, and the empathy and presence to support an organization through transformation and growth;
- 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;
- Critical problem-solving skills and creativity to balance effectively the needs of researchers, sponsors, and the University;

- Deep ties to leadership in business, government, and industry; demonstrated experience in securing major research funding from multiple sources including federal, state, and private sources;
- Successful track record of helping organizations build and sustain ecosystems that generate new opportunities for research, innovation, and societal impact;
- 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;
- 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 leader who serves as a connector, catalyst, and strategist, to create the conditions under which transformative collaborations, partnerships, and funding opportunities emerge and thrive;
- A strategic mindset combined with the ability to work effectively with senior research 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.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Senior Associate Vice President for Research Development and Strategy 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 \$280,000 - \$400,000.

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 and Stephen Kalogeras via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-minnesota/senior-associate-vice-president-research-development-and>

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.