



BAKER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Associate Dean of Research
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Knoxville, Tennessee

THE SEARCH

The Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs (the School) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (the University, UT Knoxville) seeks an accomplished scholar and collaborative academic leader to serve as its inaugural Associate Dean of Research (ADR). As Tennessee's first school dedicated to public policy and public affairs, the Baker School has established itself as an important contributor to public discourse, civic engagement, and policy-relevant scholarship. The ADR will join a dynamic leadership team and help guide the School's continued evolution as it expands its research profile and scholarly impact.

This is a formative moment for the Baker School, offering the successful candidate wide latitude to shape research strategy, culture, and infrastructure that will define the School's future. Having established growing academic programs, a strong public presence, and a reputation for policy-relevant engagement, the School is now focused on strengthening and expanding its research enterprise. The ADR will play a central role in growing the School's sponsored research funding, aiming to reach \$2M annually by 2030, and will work closely with faculty, research center leadership, and university leadership to chart the path forward. The role calls for a leader with a track record of growing an organization's research capacity as well as the relationship-building skills to unite a faculty with diverse scholarly interests around a shared sense of purpose.

Reporting to the Dean and serving as a member of the School's leadership team, the ADR will help shape research strategy, establish goals and priorities, and develop the policies and incentives that support faculty and center-based research. The ADR will also serve as the School's primary liaison on research matters across the University and with key Federal partners, including with Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and with Oak Ridge National Lab (ORNL) and the Y-12 Security Complex, where Baker faculty hold joint appointments and shared research activities. Candidates should hold a PhD in public policy, public

affairs, political science, economics, or a related field and be qualified for appointment at the rank of Professor or advanced Associate Professor in the Baker School.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to support this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE BAKER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Baker School aims to educate and produce the next generation of skilled public problem solvers grounded in the legacy of Senator Baker who are prepared to take leadership roles in their communities. The Baker School is the first and only institution of its kind in the state of Tennessee. The School's namesake, Howard H. Baker Jr., was a U.S. Senator, Senate Majority Leader, White House Chief of Staff, and Ambassador to Japan, and the School's curricula and co-curricular activities focus on Baker's guiding principles, including:

- *Confidence in America*—understanding and holding confidence in American institutions;
- *You Might Be Right*—respect for opposing viewpoints as a hallmark of leadership;
- *Finding Common Ground*—mastering the art of the possible to solve complex problems.

Across all degree programs, Baker School students are inculcated with public service values and values of viewpoint diversity and intellectual humility in and out of the classroom. The Baker School offers a [Bachelor of Science](#) in Public Affairs, a [Bachelor of Arts in Civic and Constitutional Thought](#), a [Master of Public Policy](#) (MPP), and a [Master of Public Administration](#) (MPA). For qualified students, the Baker School offers a five-year bachelor's and master's [accelerated program](#). The Baker School also has three minor programs: Public Affairs, Policy Analytics, and American Civics. By Fall 2027, the School anticipates serving 425 undergraduate majors, 175 undergraduate minors, 75 in-person MPA and MPP graduate students, and 200 online MPA students.

The Baker School has 23 world-class full-time faculty members—including those with primary tenure homes in the School as well as those with joint appointments with other schools and colleges across UT Knoxville—who bring deep subject matter expertise and applied policy-making experience. Under the umbrellas of two research centers, Baker School faculty and experts combine sound science and thoughtful policy to address challenges facing the state of Tennessee, the United States, and the world. The [Center for Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Policy](#) addresses critical energy and environmental challenges by creating policy-relevant research and educational opportunities that integrate natural, physical, and social science, and the [Center for National Security and Foreign Affairs](#) provides critical insights on national and international security challenges and foreign policy solutions through policy-relevant research, education, and engagement. Both centers enjoy strong ties across the UT Knoxville campus and with ORNL, TVA, Y-12, and other strategic partners. The School is launching a third center, the Tennessee Center for Local Governance, with a mission of strengthening local and state

government capacity through applied research, public-sector partnerships, and evidence-based policy solutions. The Baker School also houses the [Institute of American Civics](#), which is independently funded by the Tennessee legislature and is responsible for encouraging civic knowledge and participation among UT Knoxville undergraduates and the state at large.

In addition, 30 exceptionally dedicated staff members within the Baker School help ensure a seamless experience for both students and faculty.

Leadership

Marianne Wanamaker is the inaugural Dean of the Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs. She is a professor of economics and public policy, a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a research fellow at the Institute of Labor Economics (IZA) and the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. She is the former chief domestic economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisors, where she also served as the senior labor economist. From 2009 to 2023, her primary appointment was in UT Knoxville's Haslam College of Business.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN OF RESEARCH

Reporting to the Dean, the ADR will serve as the senior academic leader responsible for advancing the Baker School's research mission. As a member of the School's leadership team, the ADR will shape research strategy, establish growth goals, and develop policies, incentives, and resource allocation practices that support scholarly activity across the School. The ADR will oversee the School's research centers, ensuring their progress against strategic goals and priorities.

The ADR is the primary liaison to the University of Tennessee's research enterprise and represents the Baker School in campus-wide research initiatives, while cultivating opportunities for collaboration and externally-funded scholarship. The ADR will also work closely with faculty and staff to support proposal development, oversee research administration processes, steward internal research investments, and develop partnerships that strengthen the School's research portfolio.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Associate Dean of Research will be charged with addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Shape and implement a shared vision for research at the Baker School.

As a young and ambitious school, the Baker School offers its inaugural associate dean of research a rare chance to help define research excellence rather than inherit an established framework. This is fundamentally a builder's role, and as a key member of the Dean's leadership team, the ADR will help shape the next phase of the School's evolution by aligning faculty strengths, center activities, and

institutional priorities while helping position the School as a leading contributor to academic scholarship, applied research, and public impact. The ADR will play a crucial role in defining what research success looks like for the Baker School and establishing the strategies needed to achieve it.

Clarify and strengthen the role of research centers within the School.

The School's research centers are a defining feature and provide important opportunities for scholarship, engagement, and externally-funded activity. As the School continues to grow, there is an opportunity to clarify how centers contribute to the research mission and how faculty engage with them. The ADR will advance a model in which centers serve as hubs for scholarly activity, external partnerships, and public engagement. This work will involve developing a shared understanding of how faculty participate in and benefit from center affiliation, strengthening connections between centers and academic programs, and ensuring that the center structure supports both established and emerging areas of research.

Build infrastructure that supports faculty research success.

The Baker School has established ambitious goals for research growth and is well-positioned to expand its externally-funded research portfolio. The ADR will play a central role in supporting the School in building the structures, policies, and support systems that enable faculty and centers to succeed. As the research enterprise continues to grow, there is an opportunity to align how research activity is organized, supported, and incentivized across the School. The ADR will help develop clear approaches to workload, research expectations, resource allocation, and center participation while ensuring that faculty have access to the administrative and strategic support needed to successfully pursue funding and external support. The ADR will also build and foster a culture in which faculty are encouraged to pursue research opportunities and develop collaborative projects with other Baker School faculty and colleagues across campus.

Strengthen partnerships across the University of Tennessee research enterprise.

Public policy naturally sits at the intersection of many disciplines, and the School is well-positioned to serve as a connector across the university's broader research enterprise. The successful candidate will build strong relationships with colleagues across campus, identifying opportunities for shared grants and collaborative partnerships. This work will also involve building close, productive relationships with the university's [Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development](#), aligning the School's priorities with institution-wide strategy and funding opportunities. Beyond the university, the ADR will also be positioned to cultivate partnerships with local, state, and federal government agencies, foundations, and policy organizations that can serve as collaborators, funders, and channels for translating research into practice.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

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

- *Professional and academic credentials:* Qualifications appropriate to hold the rank of full Professor in the Baker School. Doctoral degree in Political Science, Public Policy, Public Affairs, Public Administration, Economics, or a related field required. A strong record of extramural funding and scholarly activity, especially with novel approaches to grant seeking; excellence in inter- and multi-disciplinary academic pursuits. Demonstrated appreciation for the breadth of disciplines and methodologies across the Baker School.
- *Leadership experience:* Proven skills as a highly effective, innovative, collaborative leader gained through serving as an academic department chair, center director, associate dean, or comparable role requiring significant management, financial, and administrative acumen.
- *Communication skills:* Superb written, oral, and interpersonal communication. An ability to engage individuals and groups internal to the Baker School and externally to establish key partnerships and collaborations. Diplomatic savviness to manage competing needs and priorities of constituents. A commitment to intellectual diversity in all its forms.
- *Personal qualities:* Integrity, dependability, and steadiness in a fast-paced environment. The ability to lead all members of a school with fairness, humility, compassion, and trust. Personal and professional drive, persistence, resilience, and optimism. Strong commitment to public policy and public affairs education, civic and public service values, and research.

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

Located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, [Knoxville, TN](#), is known for its excellent quality of life, relatively low cost of living, and exceptional access to outdoor recreation. The city features a vibrant downtown, strong local arts and music communities, diverse dining options, and an extensive network of parks and greenways. Residents enjoy the amenities of a growing metropolitan area while remaining closely connected to the natural beauty of East Tennessee.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the end of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, and CVs with cover letters should be sent in confidence via the [Isaacson, Miller website](#).

Jeff Kessner, Partner
Annah Wells, Senior Associate
Jenny Rubin, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to, and will not be discriminated against on the basis of, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.

Inquiries and charges of violation of Title VI (race, color, national origin), Title IX (sex), Section 504 (disability), ADA (disability), ADEA (age), sexual orientation, or veteran status should be directed to the (EEO). Requests for accommodation of a disability should be directed to the ADA Coordinator at the [EEO office](#).

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