

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Office of the President

Associate Vice President, Total Rewards

University of California

Oakland, California

The University of California (UC) seeks applications and nominations for the position of Associate Vice President of Total Rewards (AVP-TR). Reporting to the Vice President of Systemwide Human Resources and Systemwide Chief Human Resources Officer, this enterprise-wide leadership role will shape and advance a market-driven total rewards philosophy that supports the recruitment and retention of a world-class workforce across a globally recognized public university system. The AVP-TR will operate in a highly visible environment, partnering with senior leaders across the University to navigate complex strategic, operational, and governance issues.

Founded in 1868, the UC system is recognized as one of the world's largest and most prestigious academic institutions, with a tripartite mission of research, teaching, and public service. The UC system is the second largest employer in California, employing over 226,000 faculty, other academic appointees, and staff across ten campuses, six academic health centers, and three affiliated national laboratories. The ten campuses that make up the UC system – Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz – collectively enroll approximately 301,000 students and have a combined 2.5 million alumni living and working around the world. Another half million people benefit from UC's continuing education courses each year, as well as from research centers and educational programs operating throughout the state. UC's scope extends beyond its campus locations, with its national laboratories, medical centers, and outreach programs in neighboring communities, throughout California, and around the world.

This is a uniquely high-impact role, with responsibility for designing and delivering integrated compensation, benefits, retirement, and wellness programs across one of the nation's largest and most complex public higher education systems, including executive compensation programs serving approximately 200 senior leaders. The AVP-TR serves as a trusted advisor to the VP Systemwide HR, the President of the University of California, Chancellors, and Board of Regents, requiring exceptional political acumen, sound judgment, and the ability to build credibility across a broad range of stakeholders while influencing critical decisions that affect talent strategy, organizational competitiveness, and institutional sustainability. With a strong focus on advancing fairness, market-competitive compensation practices and driving innovation, this leader will champion a cohesive total rewards philosophy that strengthens UC's position as an employer of choice.

The successful candidate will be an exceptional communicator, equally translating complex compensation and benefits strategies for employees, labor representatives, executive leadership, and the Board of Regents while moving seamlessly between enterprise strategy and the policy and operational details necessary to implement complex programs.

Working collaboratively with fellow HR executives and leaders across the UC system, the AVP-TR will help shape integrated workforce strategies that align compensation, benefits, labor relations, and organizational priorities. The AVP-TR oversees a team of 56 professionals and directs an operating budget of approximately \$28 million, providing both the scale and resources to drive meaningful, systemwide impact. Through close partnership with senior leadership and stakeholders across campuses, health systems, and affiliated entities, the AVP-TR will lead the design and execution of complex programs, guide executive compensation strategy, and ensure the effective delivery of comprehensive total rewards offerings that meet the evolving needs of a diverse workforce through innovative, accessible, and employee-centered programs that improve understanding, engagement and access to total rewards.

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics for the role is outlined in this document, which was prepared by the search committee with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SYSTEM

Founded in 1868, the UC system is recognized as one of the world's largest and most prestigious academic institutions, with a tripartite mission of research, teaching, and public service. The UC system is the second largest employer in California, employing over 226,000 faculty, other academic appointees, and staff across ten campuses, six academic health centers, and three affiliated national laboratories. The ten campuses that make up the UC system – Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz – collectively enroll approximately 301,000 students and have a combined 2.5 million alumni living and working around the world. Another half million people benefit from UC's continuing education courses each year, as well as from research centers and educational programs operating throughout the state. UC's scope extends beyond its campus locations, with its national laboratories, medical centers, and outreach programs in neighboring communities, throughout California, and around the world.

The University of California Office of the President (UCOP)

Located in Oakland, California, the [University of California Office of the President](#) (UCOP) is the systemwide headquarters of the University of California, managing its fiscal and business operations and supporting the academic and research missions across its campuses, national labs, and medical centers. The Office of the President coordinates activities that allow a complex and unique system to operate efficiently as one university, furthering its public interest, academic, and research missions. It oversees and manages programs that serve the entire university system, allowing UC locations to capture the

savings and efficiencies that come from centralized operations. Learn more about UC system leadership and governance in the document appendix.

Systemwide Total Rewards

Systemwide Total Rewards creates and delivers principled total rewards programs that support the recruitment and retention of world-class faculty, other academic appointees, staff, and engaged retirees, in furtherance of UC's mission, values, and vision.

The Associate Vice President provides leadership and oversight for UC's Systemwide Total Rewards organization, aligning compensation, benefits, retirement, wellness, and executive compensation strategies to deliver a competitive, equitable, and financially sustainable rewards experience for faculty, other academic appointees, staff, executives, and retirees across the University.

The portfolio encompasses [Benefits Programs & Strategy](#), [Retirement Program Services](#), [Compensation Programs & Strategy](#), and Self-Funded Health Plans. These functions are responsible for the design, governance, administration, and continuous enhancement of the University's health, retirement, compensation, and executive pay programs. The AVP-TR ensures these critical areas operate as an integrated enterprise, advancing UC's talent, workforce, and financial priorities while supporting the University's long-term mission and commitment to excellence, fairness, and service.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF TOTAL REWARDS

Reporting directly to the Vice President of Systemwide Human Resources, the Associate Vice President of Total Rewards (AVP-TR) serves as the systemwide senior leader responsible for the strategic direction, design, administration, and continuous evolution of UC's comprehensive total rewards programs. The AVP-TR provides systemwide leadership for compensation, executive compensation, health and welfare benefits, retirement programs, and wellness initiatives, ensuring that the University's total rewards strategy supports the recruitment, retention, and engagement of world-class faculty, staff, and retirees across the UC enterprise.

The Associate Vice President oversees an operating budget of approximately \$28 million and leads a team of 56 professionals responsible for developing and administering programs that serve approximately 226,000 employees across ten campuses, six academic health systems, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and the Office of the President. The AVP-TR partners closely with campus and health system leaders, as well as executive leadership and governance bodies, to establish a clear, market-informed total rewards philosophy and ensure consistent implementation across the university system.

This role carries significant strategic, operational, and fiscal responsibility, with oversight of complex compensation, benefits, retirement, and executive pay programs that must remain competitive, equitable, compliant, and financially sustainable. The AVP-TR serves as a trusted advisor to senior leaders,

the President, Chancellors, and Regents on high-profile systemwide matters, while providing leadership on workforce trends, benefits strategy, retirement plan administration, executive compensation, and the development of innovative programs that advance UC's mission and support a dynamic workforce.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT

Provide strategic leadership for UC's Systemwide Total Rewards Strategy

- Lead the development and execution of a systemwide integrated Total Rewards strategy encompassing compensation, executive compensation, health and welfare benefits, retirement programs, and wellness initiatives.
- Ensure UC's rewards programs support the recruitment, retention, engagement, and well-being of a world-class workforce while advancing the University's mission, values, and strategic priorities.
- Partner with the President, Chancellors, Regents, health system leaders, and other stakeholders to maintain competitive, equitable, and financially sustainable programs.

Strengthen systemwide alignment across a complex and multi-campus enterprise

- Earn trust and build consensus among chancellors, faculty, staff, retirees, academic and staff senate leadership, labor representatives, retiree organizations, campus administrators, and systemwide governance bodies, leading through influence and collaboration in a highly visible and politically complex environment.
- Represent the function with executive presence in high-stakes settings, including presentations to the UC Regents and senior leadership on complex workforce, compensation, benefits, and retirement matters.
- Balance systemwide priorities with campus and health system needs, fostering strong partnerships while advancing consistent and sustainable Total Rewards strategies across the University.

Lead and continue developing a high-performing Total Rewards Organization

- Lead, mentor, and inspire a team of 56 professionals responsible for compensation, benefits, retirement, and health plan strategy and administration.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, innovation, and service excellence that supports the evolving needs of the UC and its workforce.
- Advance UC's health and wellness strategy, ensuring these highly visible and mission-critical programs continue to support employee well-being, strengthen the University's employee value proposition, and remain financially sustainable for the future.

Shape the Future of UC's Total Rewards Strategy using Data and Innovation

- Assess evolving labor market trends, workforce expectations, healthcare markets, and regulatory developments to ensure UC remains an employer of choice.
- Leverage data, analytics, technology, and market intelligence to evaluate program effectiveness, identify emerging opportunities, and inform strategic decision-making.
- Identify and implement innovative solutions that enhance the employee experience while supporting responsible stewardship of University resources.
- Champion innovative approaches to communicating Total Rewards programs that improve employees' understanding of and access to compensation and benefits.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be an accomplished human resources executive with experience in designing, leading, and advancing comprehensive total rewards programs within large, complex organizations. They will bring deep expertise in benefits, compensation, wellness, recognition, and workforce rewards strategies, along with strong analytical, financial, and operational acumen. The ideal candidate will possess exceptional relationship-building, communication, and problem-solving skills, with the ability to influence stakeholders and drive change in a highly collaborative and consensus-oriented environment. Experience in higher education and academic health care is valued, particularly within complex and multi-layered organizational structures, though UC also welcomes leaders from corporate, government, or other large-scale enterprises who are inspired by the University's public mission, scale, and institutional complexity. The successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications and characteristics.

Required

- At least 15 years of progressively responsible leadership experience in Total Rewards, including significant responsibility for compensation, executive compensation, benefits, retirement, and workforce rewards strategy within large, complex organizations;
- Deep expertise in health and welfare benefits and compensation, and Total Rewards administration, with demonstrated experience designing and leading complex health benefit strategies and a strong understanding of the technical, financial, regulatory, and operational components of comprehensive Total Rewards programs;
- Demonstrated success developing and implementing enterprise-wide Total Rewards strategies, programs, and policies that support organizational growth, talent attraction and retention, workforce engagement, and financial sustainability;
- Strong business and financial acumen, with experience overseeing significant budgets, evaluating program costs, and aligning rewards strategies with organizational priorities;
- Exceptional relationship-building and influencing skills, with the ability to navigate complex and sensitive issues through diplomacy, collaboration, and sound judgment;

- Proven ability to build credibility and trusted partnerships with senior executives, governing boards, and stakeholders across multiple business units and constituencies;
- Demonstrated ability to influence, build consensus, and achieve results across a highly decentralized, multi-location organization with diverse stakeholder interests;
- Experience leading, developing, and mentoring high-performing teams, including succession planning and talent development across multiple functional areas;
- Exceptional written, verbal, and presentation skills, with the ability to tailor complex compensation, benefits, and retirement communications for audiences ranging from employees and labor representatives to executive leadership, the President, and the Board of Regents; and
- A track record of advancing innovative, equitable, and results-oriented programs that strengthen organizational culture, workforce effectiveness, and employee experience.

Preferred

- Experience in higher education, academic health systems, healthcare, government, or similarly complex, mission-driven organizations;
- Experience working in matrixed, and stakeholder-rich environments;
- Experience supporting executive leadership teams, governing boards, regents, trustees, or other oversight bodies on compensation, benefits, or retirement matters;
- Experience working in unionized environments and managing rewards programs across multiple employee populations and compensation structures;
- Professional certifications such as Certified Compensation Professional (CCP), Certified Benefits Professional (CBP), SPHR, or SHRM-SCP; and
- An advanced degree in human resources, business, public administration, or a related field.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

UCOP is required to provide a reasonable estimate of the compensation range for this role. This range considers the wide range of factors that are considered in making compensation decisions including but not limited to experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, education, licensure and certifications, and other business and organizational needs. It is not typical for an individual to be offered a salary at or near the top of the range for a position. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience. The full salary range for this position is \$205,500 to \$427,700 annually. The budgeted salary range that the University reasonably expects to pay for this position is \$390,000 - \$415,000.

The position is located on-site in Oakland, CA.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to the Isaacson, Miller consultants supporting the search:

Rebecca Kennedy, Managing Partner
Lehman Robinson, Senior Associate
Cara Meyers, Senior Search Coordinator

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process.

For best consideration, please apply by August 31, 2026, via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-california-office-president/associate-vice-president-total-rewards>

Applications must be complete to be reviewed for consideration.

A complete application includes:

- CV or Resume.
- [Completion of the UC Applicant Self-Identification forms.](#)
- Applicants are also strongly encouraged to submit a cover letter.

The University of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected status under state or federal law.

Successful completion of a background check is required for this critical position. Details about UCOP's background check process can be found at: [UCOP HR - Background Checks](#)

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

APPENDIX. UC SYSTEM LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Board of Regents

The UC is governed by the 26-member Board of Regents, which exercises approval over University policies, financial affairs, and fees with the authority to delegate powers as it determines to be in the best interest of the University. The Board appoints the UC President and its principal officers. 18 Regents, appointed by the Governor, serve 12-year terms. The Board also appoints one student member for a one-year term, and there are seven ex officio members, including the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the Assembly, Superintendent of Public Instruction, President and Vice President of the Alumni Associations of UC, and the President of the University. In addition, two faculty members, the chair and vice chair of the systemwide Academic Senate sit on the board as non-voting members. It is the responsibility of the board to set policy and the responsibility of the University administration to implement and carry out policy, which includes responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the University.

President

The President is the executive head of the University and has full authority and responsibility over the administration of all affairs and operations of the University, except those activities within the responsibility of the Principal Officers and facilitates the development by the Board of the University's direction, goals, and strategy. The President implements the policies and objectives of the Board of Regents, and keeps the Board informed of all significant developments affecting the University.

James B. Milliken became the UC's 22nd president on August 1, 2025. President Milliken has more than 30 years of experience serving in leadership roles at large institutions. Most recently, he served as chancellor of the University of Texas System (UT) from 2018-2025, where he also held the Lee Hage and Joseph D. Jamail Regents Chair in Higher Education Leadership. As UT's chancellor, he led one of the largest public university systems in the United States, composed of 14 academic and health institutions, including seven medical schools and five Carnegie R1 research universities. He led efforts to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying state and nation, including a commitment to increasing training, education, and research programs in information technology, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, public health, and medicine.

Shared Governance

Shared governance among the Board of Regents, the President and the administration, and the Academic Senate is one of the distinctive features of the UC. The system of shared governance gives University faculty, operating through the Academic Senate, a voice in the operation of the University. Faculty participation in governance of the University through the agency of the Academic Senate is a guiding force that unifies the ten campuses of the University into a single system under a uniform standard of excellence. The faculty, through the Academic Senate, advises the Board of Regents and the administration on the development of policies and procedures that will enhance the research and

education enterprise while maintaining appropriate standards of conduct with necessary and reasonable oversight.