



Executive Director of Innovation
Texas A&M Innovation
College Station, Texas

THE SEARCH

Texas A&M Innovation (TI)—the centralized office supporting inventors and commercializing innovations across the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS or A&M System)—invites applications and nominations for the role of Executive Director of Innovation. Few roles combine scale, momentum, and mission as powerfully as this one. As one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, TAMUS operates on a level of impact that few institutions can match.

The Executive Director of Innovation is the second-in-command of the Texas A&M Innovation Office and the chief execution officer of the office’s strategic plan. The Chief Innovation Officer sets vision, strategy, and external direction; the Executive Director makes it happen — translating strategy into operating plans, holding the senior team accountable to milestones and KPIs, instrumenting the data and reporting backbone, and ensuring that every commitment made to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents is delivered on time and to standard.

This is an internally facing, operationally rigorous role. The Executive Director is deeply experienced in academic technology transfer, research administration, and innovation operations — fluent in disclosures, licensing, compliance, conflicts of interest, export control, and the institutional plumbing that makes a system-scale innovation office run. They are tactical, data-driven, and detail-obsessed. They do not need to be the visionary in the room; they need to be the person who turns the vision into a roadmap, a dashboard, and a delivered result.

All Innovation Office directors report through the Executive Director: the Director of Marketing, Director of Business Development, Director of Licensing, and Director of New Ventures, along with operations and compliance staff. The Executive Director represents the Innovation Office in internal meetings, working groups, and System-level forums when the Chief Innovation Officer is unavailable, and serves as the trusted proxy on day-to-day execution and decisions.

Texas A&M Innovation has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT TEXAS A&M INNOVATION

The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest and most productive research enterprises in the United States, with \$1.568 billion in annual R&D expenditures across 12 universities and 8 state agencies, including a comprehensive health science center and two System-wide applied research campuses (the 3,300-acre RELLIS campus and Texas A&M-Fort Worth). The Innovation Office, led by the Chief Innovation Officer, is executing the Texas A&M Innovation Strategic Plan (FY2027–FY2038): Transforming Research into Impact — a twelve-year plan organized around four pillars: Commercialization Excellence, Innovation Culture, Innovation Infrastructure, Innovation Impact, and 16 initiatives, guided by the principle of “Impact Over Revenue.”

TI provides intellectual property and commercialization needs to all 20 system members:

Texas A&M University	Texas A&M University-San Antonio
Prairie View A&M University	Texas A&M University Health Science Center
East Texas A&M University	Texas A&M AgriLife Research
Tarleton State University	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
West Texas A&M University	Texas A&M Forest Service
Texas A&M University-Kingsville	Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station
Texas A&M International University	Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service
Texas A&M University-Texarkana	Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Texas A&M University-Central Texas	Texas Division of Emergency Management

Strategic Context

Texas A&M Innovation is scaling from a reactive, royalty-oriented technology transfer function into a proactive, system-wide innovation engine measured against American Association of Universities (AAU) with over \$1B in annual R&D expenditures (Stanford, MIT, Michigan, Washington, Florida). Closing that gap requires disciplined, data-driven execution — not just vision.

Leadership

Dr. Samuel Kim is the Chief Innovation Officer and Associate Vice Chancellor for The Texas A&M University System. In these roles, he leads the System’s innovation agenda, driving research commercialization, startup creation, and strategic partnerships with corporate, venture, and government stakeholders to translate university discoveries into real-world impact.

Dr. Kim brings over two decades of experience in deep-technology commercialization, spanning every stage of the innovation lifecycle — from inventor and published researcher to entrepreneur and startup operator, to venture capital fund manager. He founded and led early-stage venture funds that built extensive syndicates of Fortune 500 corporate co-investors to commercialize university spinouts in advanced materials, semiconductors, photonics, and nanotechnology. He has served in senior technology and business leadership roles in startups, guided companies from laboratory proof of concept through production scale-up and acquisition, and he has served on multiple boards and advisory councils advancing university-based innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Kim holds a dual PhD in Electrical Engineering and Nanotechnology from the University of Washington and B.S. and M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University. He is a named inventor on multiple patents and has received best paper awards at international conferences.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This role sits at the center of a system-wide effort to translate strategy into measurable impact at scale. In doing so, the Executive Director will take direct ownership of addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Translate an Ambitious Strategic Plan into Coordinated, Measurable Delivery

The Texas A&M Innovation Strategic Plan spans 16 initiatives across four pillars and a twelve-year horizon. Delivering on the plan will require translating strategy into operating plans with clear ownership, milestones, and success criteria. The Executive Director must build and maintain a focused, integrated roadmap and drive a consistent, disciplined cadence across the senior team. This includes identifying breakdowns in disclosure flow, licensing timelines, and venture progression early and driving them to resolution before they impact outcomes. Success will depend on coordinating delivery across Discovery, Licensing, Ventures, and Marketing so they operate as a unified system.

Build and Lead a High-Functioning, Accountable Senior Team

The Executive Director must lead a senior team spanning Marketing, Business Development, Licensing, New Ventures, and core operations. While each unit has distinct priorities and pressures, success requires establishing clear and consistent expectations, setting measurable goals tied to the Strategic Plan, and maintaining a regular cadence of performance management and feedback. The role demands active coordination across functions where priorities, timelines, and resource needs both compete and reinforce one another. It also requires resolving conflicts and making tradeoffs at the leadership level without over-reliance on escalation to the Chief Innovation Officer. Over time, performance will depend on building a culture of accountability where leaders operate with clarity, trust, and shared ownership of outcomes rather than within functional silos.

Build a Metrics-Driven Operating Environment

The Innovation Office must operate with clear and reliable data across disclosures, licensing activity, startups, and industry engagement. The Executive Director is responsible for standing up the systems, dashboards, and reporting discipline required to track performance against Strategic Plan goals and AAU peer benchmarks. This includes translating disparate data across functions into a coherent view of pipeline health and organizational performance. It also requires producing clear, decision-ready reporting for leadership, including the Chief Innovation Officer, Chancellor, and Board of Regents. Success will depend on embedding measurement into daily operations so that performance is visible, decisions are data-informed, and outcomes are continuously tracked against expectations.

Manage Operations and Risk Across a Complex System

The Innovation Office operates within a complex system that includes universities, state agencies, and multiple central administrative functions. The Executive Director must establish disciplined operations across budget, contracting, staffing, and vendor management while working in close partnership with TAMUS finance, HR, and legal. The role requires maintaining rigorous compliance across IP management, licensing, conflicts of interest, export control, and federal sponsor requirements in an environment where risk exposure is constant and can carry significant financial and legal repercussions. It also requires building audit-ready processes, documentation, and controls that can withstand scrutiny without slowing the pace of commercialization. Success will depend on the ability to manage operational and regulatory complexity while supporting ongoing organizational redesign and scaling the Office in line with the Strategic Plan.

Represent the Office and Lead Key Initiatives

The Executive Director serves as a core extension of the Chief Innovation Officer, representing the Office across System meetings, university engagements, and internal forums. The role requires exercising sound judgment and carrying the CIO's authority in day-to-day decisions while maintaining credibility with research vice presidents, deans, and System leadership. In parallel, the Executive Director will lead high-priority, time-bound initiatives that cut across functions, institutions, and external partners. These efforts often require coordinating across multiple universities, agencies, and stakeholders with differing priorities and timelines. Success will depend on the ability to represent the Office with consistency and clarity while driving alignment and delivery on complex initiatives.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This role is defined by ownership of execution at every level. The Executive Director is responsible for building and running the operating system that turns strategy into plans, plans into milestones, and milestones into delivered outcomes. These outcomes will not occur because the strategic plan is well-written. They will happen because someone in the building owns delivery — every quarter, every

initiative, every KPI. That someone is the Executive Director. The essential duties and responsibilities below define the core domains in which the Executive Director delivers results:

Strategic Plan Execution & Program Management (30%).

- Own end-to-end execution of the Texas A&M Innovation Strategic Plan (FY2027–FY2038) — all 16 initiatives across the four pillars — Commercialization Excellence, Innovation Culture, Innovation Infrastructure, Innovation Impact.
- Translate each initiative into a detailed operating plan with owners, milestones, dependencies, budgets, and clear definitions of done; maintain a single integrated roadmap reviewed weekly with the Chief Innovation Officer.
- Run a disciplined cadence of weekly leadership stand-ups, monthly initiative reviews, and quarterly Strategic Plan readouts; surface blockers early and drive them to resolution.
- Manage cross-initiative dependencies — for example, Discovery → Licensing → Ventures hand-offs, Marketing campaigns supporting Faculty Awareness, and Industry Front Door integration across all functions.

Senior Team Leadership & Coordination (20%).

- Directly manage the Director of Marketing, Director of Business Development, Director of Licensing, and Director of New Ventures, plus operations and compliance staff.
- Set quarterly individual and team goals tied to Strategic Plan KPIs; conduct regular 1:1s, performance check-ins, and annual reviews.
- Build a high-trust, high-accountability leadership team culture with clear expectations, candid feedback, and no surprises.
- Resolve cross-functional conflicts, prioritization tradeoffs, and resource contention without escalating every issue to the Chief Innovation Officer.

KPI Instrumentation, Data & Reporting (20%).

- Build and own the Innovation Office's KPI and reporting backbone — invention disclosures, licenses executed, license income, startups formed, sponsored research, faculty awareness, industry engagement, and ecosystem metrics.
- Stand up dashboards and operating reports that give the Chief Innovation Officer, the Chancellor, and the Board of Regents real-time visibility into Strategic Plan progress against AAU \$1B+ peer benchmarks.

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- Prepare Board of Regents briefings, Chancellor updates, and System-level executive reports — on time, on standard, with clean data and a clear narrative.
 - Drive a data-driven operating rhythm: if it isn't measured, it isn't managed.

Operations, Compliance & Risk (15%).

- Oversee Innovation Office operations — budget, contracts, staffing, vendor management, IT, and infrastructure — in partnership with TAMUS finance, HR, and legal.
- Ensure rigorous compliance across invention disclosures, IP management, licensing agreements, conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, export control (ITAR/EAR), Bayh-Dole, federal sponsor terms, and System policy.
- Maintain audit-ready documentation, SOPs, and process controls; identify and remediate operational and compliance risks proactively.
- Lead the Office through TAMUS HR title mapping, organizational redesign (Initiative #1), and any future structural changes required by the Strategic Plan.

Representing the Office (10%).

- Represent the Chief Innovation Officer in internal meetings, System working groups, university-level engagements, and operational forums when the CIO is unavailable.
- Carry the CIO's authority and decisions credibly — informed, prepared, and able to make commitments on the Office's behalf within agreed boundaries.
- Maintain trusted working relationships with research vice presidents, deans, department heads, TAMUS general counsel, finance, HR, sponsored research, and agency leadership.

Special Projects & Strategic Initiatives (5%).

- Lead high-priority, time-bound initiatives directly assigned by the Chief Innovation Officer (e.g., new program launches, M&A or partnership opportunities, crisis response, major external visits).
- Serve as integration lead for cross-System efforts spanning multiple universities, agencies, or external partners.

YEAR-ONE PRIORITIES

- Within 60 days, deliver a fully sequenced operating plan for all 16 Strategic Plan initiatives — with named owners, quarterly milestones, dependencies, budgets, and acceptance criteria — reviewed and signed off by the Chief Innovation Officer.

- Stand up the Innovation Office KPI dashboard with monthly cadence, benchmarked against AAU \$1B+ peers and FY2027 baseline; deliver the first Board of Regents-ready quarterly readout.
- Establish the senior team operating rhythm — weekly leadership stand-up, monthly initiative reviews, quarterly Strategic Plan readouts — with crisp agendas, minutes, and follow-through.
- Complete the Organizational Redesign (Initiative #1) including TAMUS HR title mapping, role definitions, and reporting lines for the Marketing, Business Development, Licensing, and New Ventures functions.
- Audit and stabilize core operations: budget controls, contracts and licensing administration, compliance posture (COI/COC, export control, Bayh-Dole), and audit readiness.
- Earn the trust of the senior team and the Chief Innovation Officer such that the CIO can confidently delegate day-to-day execution and external representation.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

In two years, the Texas A&M Innovation Office will run on a disciplined operating cadence. Every Strategic Plan initiative will have a named owner, a current status, and a quarterly readout. KPIs will be instrumented, benchmarked against AAU \$1B+ peers, and reported up to the Chancellor and Board of Regents. The senior team — Marketing, Business Development, Licensing, and New Ventures — will be high-trust and high-accountability. Compliance is clean. Audits are uneventful. This should allow the Chief Innovation Officer to meaningfully spend more time on external strategy, faculty engagement, and Regents-level positioning — because day-to-day execution is in the Executive Director's hands.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Required

- 10-15 years of progressive experience in academic technology transfer, research administration, and innovation operations at an R1 university, research institution, or federal lab — including hands-on experience with disclosures, licensing, IP, sponsored research, and compliance.
- At least five years in a senior operations, chief-of-staff, deputy-director, or executive-director role overseeing multi-function teams and large multi-year programs.
- Demonstrated track record of executing complex, multi-year strategic plans on time, on budget, and with measurable, reported outcomes.
- Deep working knowledge of academic technology transfer regulations and frameworks: Bayh-Dole, federal sponsor terms (NSF, NIH, DOE, DOD, DARPA), conflict of interest and conflict of commitment policy, export control (ITAR/EAR), and university IP policy.
- Proven people manager — has directly led and developed senior individual contributors and other managers, set goals, run performance cycles, and made hard personnel calls.

- Highly data-driven and tactical: comfortable building dashboards, running KPI cadences, and instrumenting reporting from scratch. Fluent with operating tools (project management, CRM, BI, contract management, IP management systems).
- Exceptional written and verbal communication; comfortable preparing and delivering Board of Regents-ready materials.
- Detail-obsessed with disciplined follow-through.

Preferred

- Master's or doctoral degree in a relevant field (science, engineering, business, public administration, law, or research administration).
- CLP (Certified Licensing Professional) or RTTP (Registered Technology Transfer Professional) credential.
- Prior experience at a \$1B+ R&D AAU institution or comparable national lab or large research system.
- Familiarity with the Texas A&M University System, TAMUS HR title structure, RELLIS, and the Texas innovation ecosystem.
- Experience working with Boards of Regents, Trustees, or comparable governance bodies.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LOCATION

- **Reports to:** Chief Innovation Officer
- **Direct Reports:** Director of Marketing, Director of Business Development, Director of Licensing, Managing Director of New Ventures, and Innovation Office operations staff
- **Status:** Full-time, Exempt
- **Reports to Strategic Plan Alignment:** All 16 Initiatives — owns end-to-end execution of the Texas A&M Innovation Strategic Plan (FY2027–FY2038)
- **Location:** College Station, TX (with regular travel across the A&M System; Austin presence as needed)

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Submit a CV and a brief statement (no more than two pages) describing a complex, multi-year strategic plan or operating program you have personally driven to delivery — including the cadence you ran, the KPIs you instrumented, the team you managed, and the outcomes you produced. Describe how you would approach the first 90 days as Executive Director of the Texas A&M Innovation Office.

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via [the Isaacson, Miller website](#).

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This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Texas A&M Innovation. 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 Texas A&M Innovation would supersede any conflicting information in this document.