UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Associate Vice President for Research Administration
The University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE SEARCH

The University of Minnesota ("the University")—a prestigious, comprehensive, public, land-grant research university—seeks a visionary, collaborative and dynamic leader to serve as the Associate Vice President for Research Administration. This is an exciting moment for the Associate Vice President to join with the arrival of the new Vice President for Research and Innovation, Dr. 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 Associate Vice President for Research Administration will provide leadership and coordination across Sponsored Projects Administration, the Office of Cost Analysis, and the Office of Research Information Systems to support an integrated approach to research administration in alignment with the strategic direction of the Research and Innovation Office. A visionary leader with a commitment to the mission of land grant universities, the

AVP will lead university-wide research administration, policy development, and compliance activities and provide research administration expertise to the University by serving on key institutional committees and working closely with members of the University community. The ideal candidate will have at least 10 years of progressive experience in research administration leadership roles within a major research university, federal government, or another entity engaged in sponsored research as well as a strong knowledge base of relevant regulatory, legal, and policy issues, and the ability to handle a high-intensity research administration operation characterized by 10,000+ proposals and agreements annually.

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 18 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 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.

Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)

The Office of Sponsored Projects Administration is a University-wide office authorized to submit research proposals and receive awards from external sources on behalf of the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota. SPA is also the fiduciary for the University on grant-related matters.

SPA creates a seamless process throughout the sponsored project lifecycle, with the goals of reducing administrative burden, increasing faculty and staff knowledge, and providing the highest level of support possible in research, creative, and programmatic external funding pursuits. This team currently consists of a director and more than 50 staff members.

Office of Cost Analysis

The Office of Cost Analysis works to provide analytical, cost accounting, and effort reporting expertise to ensure that sponsored activity at the University of Minnesota is in compliance with federal principles and standards. Consisting of a staff of a director and two financial analysts, work of the office includes the calculating and negotiating of federal reimbursement rates for facilities and administrative expenses that are incurred in support of sponsored research and other sponsored projects in addition to establishing

policy and providing oversight and guidance for the University's effort certification process to ensure compliance with federal regulations.

Office of Research Information Systems

The Office of Research Information Systems (ORIS) identifies, implements, and sustains information system solutions to benefit the University of Minnesota's research community. ORIS enhances services that can be leveraged centrally, works closely with the Office of Information Technology on enterprise-wide solutions, and ensures technology alignment within the institution's larger IT context. ORIS is located within the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) and with many different areas of services and specializations, the office works in partnership with RIO units to simplify business processes, inform decisions, and streamline research activities in all aspects of RIO's business. The team within ORIS consists of a director and approximately 15 staff members.

Research Leadership

Dr. Cynthia Carnes, a nationally recognized research leader and university administrator, joined the University of Minnesota as Vice President Research and Innovation on July 31, 2026. As VPRI Dr. Carnes leads 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 joined 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.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

The AVP for Research Administration leads University-wide research administration, policy development, and compliance activities. In this role, the AVP oversees the University's Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA), the Office of Cost Analysis (OCA), and the Office of Research Information Systems functions and works closely with offices, departments, and colleges across the University to ensure adherence to federal, state, and institutional standards for research proposals and awards and acts as a policy owner for research administration policies, including regular updates and comprehensive reviews. Direct reports for the AVP for Research Administration will include the Director of Sponsored Projects Administration, the Director of the Office of Cost Analysis, the Director of the Office of Research Information Systems, and the Senior Director of Operational Excellence.

Core Responsibilities

- Provide leadership across Sponsored Projects Administration, the Office of Cost Analysis, and the Office of Research Information Systems coordinated by an operational excellence expert to support an integrated approach to research administration;

- Provide vision and leadership to offices and teams under direct supervision, in alignment with the strategic direction of the Research and Innovation Office (RIO);
- Support a culture of ongoing professional development, advancement opportunities and the delivery of high-quality customer service;
- Oversee the development and conducting of staff training and data and reporting initiatives;
- Oversee development of research-related metrics to ensure timely processing of sponsored project actions and equitable workload distribution, operational improvement, and institutional decision making;
- Partner with the Director of the Office Research Information Systems and other University technology leaders to align research information systems, data, and technology priorities with research administration needs;
- Oversee enterprise-wide research administration policies, procedures, and system workflows, utilizing embedded operational excellence expertise to optimize business processes, track service performance, and minimize administrative friction;
- Monitor and provide institutional expertise on sponsored research university policies
- Have current knowledge of relevant regulatory, legal, and policy issues and advise leadership on regulatory or other changes from external sponsors;
- Represent RIO on committees related to the functions of the office;
- Provide strategic guidance to the Office of Cost Analysis;
- Collaborate with other leaders in RIO and other university offices such as the Office of General Counsel and the Chief Compliance Officer to support the research and innovation mission;
- Other duties as assigned to support the Research and Innovation Office.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody all of the desired qualifications, skills, and experiences, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications and personal attributes:

- A commitment to the scholarly, educational, service, and land-grant missions of the University of Minnesota;

- At least 10 years of experience in research administration leadership roles with progressively increasing responsibility within a major research university, federal government, or another entity engaged in sponsored research.

- A record of success in leading and motivating others to embrace the research and innovation mission while providing responsive, timely and compliant service is required

- Track record of effectively managing professional staff within a large organization of 25+ individuals.

- Expertise in driving change management across hybrid teams, with a track record of bridging sponsored projects, compliance, and IT/systems into a cohesive, high-performing research administration portfolio.
- Specific experience in administering federal research grants and contracts, corporate-sponsored research, and clinical trial agreements.
- Experience in developing, implementing, and using grants management information systems.
- Demonstrated success in implementing new policies, procedures, and business processes and have comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of research administration in a complex, decentralized environment
- Ability to handle a high-intensity research administration operation characterized by 10,000+ proposals and agreements annually.
- Demonstrated experience, with specific examples, of leading teams through process and organizational change.
- Proven success in delivering a customer-centric approach to research administration.
- Specific leadership examples demonstrating the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence applications for research administration.
- Experience in designing and delivering an effective training curriculum to a diverse audience across an institution.
- Significant professional experience in serving on and leading university-wide committees in the research administration domain.
- Ability to demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence, mastery of technical knowledge, and exceptional interpersonal and relationship-building skills
- Multiple years of experience in policy development and interpretation, particularly in the domain of federal grant agencies.
- Established track record of working with organizations such as NCURA, COGR, APLU, AAU, and other relevant groups.
- BA/BS degree, Master's degree preferred.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Associate Vice President for Research Administration 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 $285,000 - $325,000.

The University of Minnesota offers excellent benefits. Please visit the Office of Human Resources website for more information regarding benefit eligibility.

ABOUT 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 Twin Cities 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, a place that ranks highly in quality of life surveys.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

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: https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-minnesota/associate-vice-president-research-administration. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Rebecca Kennedy, Managing Partner
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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.