



Harris-Pratt Executive Director, AI Institute
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York

THE SEARCH

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), a leading private research university, renowned for technical innovation and creativity, seeks a visionary and entrepreneurial leader to serve as the inaugural Harris-Pratt Executive Director of its new AI Institute. In support of [RIT's 2035 Strategic Framework: Transforming Lives Through Creativity and Innovation](#), the new AI Institute will serve as a university-wide focal point for advancing artificial intelligence research, strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, cultivating external partnerships, and elevating RIT's reputation and impact in AI.

This is a distinctive opportunity for a leader who combines a strong research background in the field with the ability to build an ambitious, externally engaged university-wide institute at scale. As the founding leader of the AI Institute, the Harris-Pratt Executive Director will shape RIT's trajectory in artificial intelligence for the next decade by establishing national visibility and building the structures, partnerships, and culture necessary for long-term success. The new AI Institute will serve as a university-wide coordinating structure that enhances RIT's competitiveness in research, funding, and talent recruitment; amplifies interdisciplinary strengths across the university; and provides new resources and visibility for faculty.

Building upon RIT's substantial foundation in AI research and community engagement, as well as the institution's strengths in experiential learning, applied research, and strong industry engagement, the AI Institute will build upon the success of the Center for Human-Aware Artificial Intelligence (CHAI), a community of approximately 50 faculty affiliates conducting research in AI that will serve as the initial core of the Institute. RIT has distinctive strengths in areas including human-centered AI, brain-inspired computing, machine learning, and perception. The transition to an Institute is intended to strengthen external engagement and create new opportunities for collaboration, visibility, and growth. The AI Institute aspires to advance AI research, education, and responsible applications across disciplines.

RIT has been a leader in AI education for decades, with the university's first course on Artificial Intelligence in 1986. Since then, RIT has grown a substantial footprint in AI education, with over 150

courses on campus relating to AI topics, as well as dedicated programs, such as a MS in Artificial Intelligence, MS in Business Analytics and AI, BS in Artificial Intelligence, minor in Artificial Intelligence, minor in AI and Society, and other programs.

The surrounding ecosystem at RIT provides a strong foundation upon which to build a world-class AI institute. Research in AI spans all of RIT's colleges, including work on accessibility for people with disabilities, business analytics, creative technologies, computational linguistics, edge computing, manufacturing, robotics, semiconductors, and other areas. RIT's PhD program in Computing and Information Sciences has been a key driver of AI research growth, and the program is ranked #57 nationally by CSRankings, which is based on a 10-year average of papers at top computing venues. RIT ranks #26 in CSRankings for artificial intelligence and is rising fast, with publication metrics that rank it #9 in the nation from 2021 to 2026. Other subfield rankings include: educational research (#8), human-computer interaction (#20), web and information retrieval (#28), computer vision (#55), machine learning (#56), and natural language processing (#56).

Rochester Institute of Technology has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document and will remain confidential.

ABOUT ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Founded in 1829, Rochester Institute of Technology was an early pioneer of practice-based and cooperative education and remains home to leading creators, entrepreneurs, innovators, and researchers. The university enrolls 18,532 undergraduates and 2,875 graduate students in more than 200 programs, and across [nine colleges and two degree-granting units](#), and [five global locations](#), placing it among the largest private universities in the U.S. RIT is internationally [recognized and ranked](#) for academic leadership in business, computing, engineering, imaging science, liberal arts, sustainability, and fine and applied arts. RIT is also home to the [National Technical Institute for the Deaf](#), the world's first and largest technological college for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. RIT's cooperative education program is one of the oldest and largest in the nation.

In 2019, RIT moved into the high research activity institution or "R2" category under the updated Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning, ranking it among the top six percent of colleges and universities in the nation for research activity. U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) ranks RIT No. 5 in the U.S. for co-op or internship programs, No. 44 among best-value schools, and No. 32 among most innovative. Sponsored research awards totaled \$105 million in 2025, the highest in RIT's history. Today, RIT counts nearly 154,000 alumni around the world. Its endowment is currently valued at \$1.475 billion, and the university benefits from sound financial management.

In 2023, RIT completed [Transforming RIT: The Campaign for Greatness](#), surpassing its \$1 billion goal, which has contributed to the continued investment in human and physical resources at the university

that cultivate an environment of innovation and collaboration with facilities such as the [Student Hall for Exploration and Development \(SHED\)](#) opened in 2023 with major facilities for the performing arts, and new classrooms, surrounding an enormous multi-story core of makerspaces. In 2025, the university published its [Strategic Framework 2035](#), which builds on RIT's history of innovation and growth to reaffirm its purpose as a global, interdisciplinary university that empowers future leaders and drives creative, world-changing impact for the greater good.

Leadership

President Sanders

RIT is led by Dr. William H. Sanders, who became the 11th President of the Rochester Institute of Technology on July 1, 2025. President Sanders has nearly 40 years of experience in higher education, and is an accomplished educator, entrepreneur, and scholar, doing work at the forefront of national efforts to make the U.S. power grid smart and resilient. He most recently served as the Dr. William D. and Nancy W. Strecker Dean of the College of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh from 2020 to 2025. Prior to Carnegie Mellon, Sanders spent 25 years as a tenured professor and held the Herman M. Dieckamp Endowed Chair in Engineering at the University of Illinois.

Provost David

Dr. Prabu David is Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. David is focused on the responsible integration of AI in teaching and research, developing strategic overseas partnerships, strengthening the university's identity as a destination for creative technologists, and expanding the health sciences portfolio. Before RIT, he served as the dean of the College of Communication Arts and Science at Michigan State University for eight years. He has also held administrative roles at Washington State University and Ohio State University.

ABOUT AI INSTITUTE

The inaugural Harris-Pratt Executive Director will lead the Institute's launch with goals including:

- Accelerate large-scale sponsored research
- Expand and cultivate AI research community on campus
- Advance partnerships with industry, government, and philanthropy
- Strengthen faculty recruitment and retention

RIT has already established a successful model for university-wide research institutes through the ESL Global Cybersecurity Institute (GCI). Since its launch in 2019, GCI has strengthened faculty recruitment, research activity, external funding, and cross-college collaboration while preserving existing academic governance structures within departments and colleges.

Benefiting from this successful model of campus-wide partnerships for accelerating research, RIT's new AI Institute is envisioned as complementary to existing colleges and their academic programs. Faculty based in RIT colleges would affiliate with the AI Institute, with a share of overhead return from external research grants being one source of funding for the Institute.

ROLE OF THE HARRIS-PRATT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RIT Board of Trustees member and immediate past chair Jeff Harris '75 and President's Roundtable member and College of Liberal Arts National Council chair Joyce Pratt made a transformative gift of \$5 million in June 2026 to endow the Harris-Pratt Executive Director position. Their history of support of RIT since 1985 has included scholarships, professorships, acadFemic programs, and student initiatives, with lifetime giving now exceeding \$30 million.

The Harris-Pratt Executive Director will provide strategic, academic, and external leadership for the Institute, including partnership development, resource generation, and faculty collaboration. Given the university-wide role of the AI Institute, its operational support provided by a host college, and its connection across the university, there are three key reporting and oversight relationships for this role: The role will have oversight by the deans of the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts, with a dotted-line relationship to the university's Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs reflecting the Institute's university-wide scope, and administratively housed in the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, which will serve as the host college and administrative reporting line.

The nature of the role will reflect the phased nature of Institute development, recognizing that early years emphasize foundation-building, considering: research growth and funding success; faculty recruitment, engagement, and interdisciplinary participation; fundraising and partnership development; and institutional reputation and external impact.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The successful inaugural Executive Director will address the following opportunities and challenges that are central to the founding, growth, impact, and success of the AI Institute:

Develop and advance a cohesive AI ecosystem to amplify existing strengths

The AI Institute is envisioned as a university-wide coordinating and enabling structure that builds upon existing AI activities across RIT. Currently, a substantial research foundation for the Institute has been established through the Center for Human-Aware Artificial Intelligence (CHAI). The inaugural Harris-Pratt Executive Director will have the exciting opportunity to shape the direction of this new Institute into a more visible and coordinated enterprise by leveraging, unifying, and amplifying AI strengths across RIT's various efforts. Working closely with faculty, deans, university leadership, and external stakeholders and partners, the Executive Director will develop a compelling vision that fosters a collaborative,

interdisciplinary culture that engages faculty across colleges and provides a stronger institutional platform for research, partnerships, recruitment, and external influence. This leader will provide strategic leadership in aligning the Institute's vision with RIT's strategic priorities while capitalizing on existing strengths and emerging opportunities in areas such as human-centered, human-aware, trustworthy, applied, and physically grounded AI, and the intersections with healthcare, accessibility, manufacturing, sustainability, liberal arts, and creative disciplines. The incoming leader will serve as a connector and convener across colleges, bringing people together around shared priorities and ambitious initiatives to help researchers pursue large multidisciplinary research opportunities. This founding leader will be comfortable navigating alignment among diverse constituencies while establishing the Institute's credibility and building faculty confidence to accelerate research growth and faculty success through this endeavor. Ultimately, the founding leader will help transform the AI Institute into a cohesive AI ecosystem through a phased plan for Institute growth that advances research, elevates RIT's national profile in AI, and serves as a catalyst for sustainable future growth and impact.

Accelerate AI research growth and faculty success

A central purpose of the AI Institute is to strengthen RIT's ability to expand the Institute's research portfolio and successfully recruit and retain faculty. In particular, the most important early activities to focus on include developing mechanisms such as seed funding, proposal support, faculty mentoring, coordination of larger research efforts, cultivation of multi-investigator projects or large-scale interdisciplinary initiatives; helping colleges recruit and retain top faculty whose work advances institutional priorities across colleges; cultivating external partnerships with industry, government, and/or philanthropy; and when feasible on a later phase, creating student-facing community building initiatives around AI research topics. A successful leader will possess the ability to connect and convene researchers across disciplines, enable faculty to secure and conduct large-scale research grants and initiatives, expand funding opportunities and pathways to commercialization for RIT faculty, remove barriers to collaboration and innovative projects, and work with faculty leaders in attracting and retaining high-caliber faculty while ensuring credible mechanisms for faculty consultation and transparency.

Cultivate sustainable resources, philanthropic support, and external engagement

The long-term success of the AI Institute will be supported by a diverse array of funding, including institutional support, grants from federal funding agencies and foundations, industry partnerships, and philanthropy. This role will require an entrepreneurial spirit and an understanding of how initiatives across these sources of support can reinforce one another to strengthen and grow the institute. While RIT has developed many corporate relationships for experiential learning and other curricular opportunities, those connections are often distributed across units. It will be essential for the founding leader to establish the Institute as a single entry point for industry partners seeking AI expertise, collaborations for research or industry applications, and opportunities for innovation and partnerships. The Institute is expected to play a significant external-facing role with industry, alumni, donors, and external organizations in the private and public sectors. As AI continues to evolve rapidly, the founding leader must be well-equipped to tell a compelling story about RIT's contributions, strengths, and aspirations in the AI research landscape.

and to translate technical concepts into accessible language for a wide variety of audiences. Partnering with the University Advancement and Marketing and Communications offices, the Executive Director will lead philanthropic fundraising efforts and cultivate partnerships with foundations, government, and industry.

Lead organizational change through collaboration, trust building, and institutional influence

While the AI Institute will not serve as a tenure home to faculty or have its own academic programs, it stands to greatly impact RIT's research and educational missions through influence, partnerships, and coordination. The Executive Director will build a coherent AI community that is supported and cultivated, building trust across faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders while guiding the transition from CHAI to a broader university-wide structure. The Executive Director will create meaningful mechanisms for faculty consultation and develop an organizational culture characterized by collaboration, accountability, and shared purpose. This leader will build and lead a high-performing Institute team, including supervising a Research Director role within the institute. The Executive Director will coordinate relationships among AI-related activities and entities across campus and serve as a visible spokesperson and thought leader for RIT's AI research and innovation ecosystem. Success will require balancing diplomacy and relationship-building with the willingness to challenge existing structures, experiment with new approaches, and help the university adapt to a rapidly evolving AI landscape. Acting as both a connector and catalyst for change, the Executive Director will communicate a coherent vision to internal and external audiences, create momentum around ambitious initiatives, and establish the Institute as a trusted, university-wide source of leadership, collaboration, innovation, and opportunity in artificial intelligence.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate must possess the intellectual credibility and professional stature to engage faculty, research sponsors, and external partners at the highest levels and maintain strong standing within the academic and research community. This may be reflected through scholarly achievement, research leadership, innovation leadership, or equivalent distinction in industry or government. Candidates with appropriate qualifications will be considered for a tenured academic rank (e.g., professor) at RIT, with their specific level of ongoing personal research activity varying based on the candidate's background. The successful candidate will be:

- A strategic thinker with the ability to turn plans into measurable outcomes and lead through influence, trust, and clarity in a shared governance environment;
- Capable of balancing academic values with external expectations;
- Experienced in large-scale collaboration;
- Successful in securing external funding, partnerships, and/or philanthropic support;
- Committed to ethical, inclusive, and human-centered approaches to AI;
- And a collaborative and innovative leader and team player with strong interpersonal communication skills.

Location

Located in Henrietta, a suburb just south of Rochester, New York, RIT's expansive 1,300-acre campus blends modern architecture with green spaces, creating a dynamic environment for innovation, learning, and creativity. The campus features cutting-edge facilities, including specialized labs and studios, reflecting RIT's strengths in technology, design, and experiential education.

Just a short drive away, the city of Rochester offers a rich cultural and historical backdrop. Located on the southern shore of Lake Ontario and intersected by the Genesee River, Rochester is known for its legacy of innovation, once home to major companies like Kodak and Xerox. Today, the city of Rochester is a dynamic hub for business and technology and is home to leading companies, high-tech industries, and start-up enterprises in optics, imaging, manufacturing, engineering, software, and health care.

Rochester is also a thriving culinary destination, a playground for music enthusiasts, a nature lovers' paradise, an area known for charming festivals, and an imaginative arts and theater scene. Home to nearly 1.1 million people, Greater Rochester is the third-largest metro area in New York. Rochester is a multifaceted, vibrant city, and one of the best to visit, live in, study, work, and enjoy.

COMPENSATION

The university offers a competitive and comprehensive benefits package. The expected base salary range for this role is \$275,000 to \$400,000. The salary will be commensurate with qualifications, experience, market, and organizational considerations.

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/rochester-institute-technology/harris-pratt-executive-director-ai-institute>

Greg Esposito, Partner
Silvia Cheng, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller | [imsearch.com](https://www.imsearch.com)

In compliance with New York State's Pay Transparency Act, the salary range for this position is listed above. Rochester Institute of Technology considers factors such as (but not limited to) scope and responsibilities of the position, candidate's work experience, education/training, key skills, internal peer equity, as well as, market and organizational considerations when extending an offer. The hiring process for this position may require a criminal background check and/or motor vehicle records check. Any verbal or written offer made is contingent on satisfactory results, as determined by Human Resources. RIT provides equal opportunity to all qualified individuals and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, age,

marital status, sex, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, veteran status or disability in its hiring, admissions, educational programs and activities. RIT provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities under the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York Human Rights Law, or similar applicable law. If you need reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please contact the Human Resources office at 585-475-2424 or email your request to hr@rit.edu. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis. If you need reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please contact scheng@imsearch.com. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis.

RIT uses E-Verify to confirm employment eligibility for new and existing employees working on federally funded contracts that contain that requirement. Before considering employment with RIT, please read the language from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Social Security Administration and the Department of Justice by clicking on the associated links below:

- [English E-Verify Participation Poster](#)
- [Spanish E-Verify Participation Poster](#)
- [English Right to Work Poster](#)
- [Spanish Right to Work Poster](#)

You must have Adobe reader to view these posters.

Clery Act Safety Information:

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is committed to the safety and security of all members of its community. The Clery Act information is provided in compliance with federal law to inform current and potential RIT students and employees of crime reporting procedures; Campus Safety law enforcement authority; crime statistics for three previous calendar years; and other matters of importance related to safety and security on campus. You can obtain a copy of the annual Safety and Security report online at: <http://www.rit.edu/fa/publicsafety/federalcompliance.html> and selecting the link for the Annual Fire and Safety Report or by contacting the Office of Public Safety at (585)475-2853 or by sending a request to RIT Public Safety 61 Lomb Memorial Drive Rochester, NY 14623-5603

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). 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 RIT would supersede any conflicting information in this document.