



**Search for the Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Research
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
EVANSTON, IL**

THE SEARCH

Northwestern University (Northwestern or the University), the world-renowned, private research-intensive university with campuses located in Evanston and Chicago, Illinois, and Doha, Qatar, welcomes nominations and expressions of interest for the position of Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Research (AVP).

The Sponsored Research Office is a critical unit that provides strategic oversight and administrative support for all of Northwestern's research and scholarly activities—a portfolio of nearly \$1 billion in annual sponsored research. Sponsored Research supports the University's 12 schools and colleges, including nearly 170 school- and college-based research centers and 35 University-wide research centers and institutes. The AVP role represents a rare opportunity for a seasoned research administration professional to build on the tremendous growth of Northwestern's sponsored research enterprise. The University has a vibrant interdisciplinary culture that deeply engages faculty as well as undergraduate and graduate students. The University is poised to surpass \$1 billion in sponsored research for the first time during the current fiscal year and has recently implemented a new research administration and analytics system, so the AVP will join Northwestern at an exciting and pivotal time.

Reporting to the Vice President for Research within the Office for Research, the AVP works collaboratively across the research enterprise to develop, implement, and oversee a customer-focused sponsored research office supporting a broad research portfolio. The AVP leads a team of five direct reports plus an executive assistant and oversees a sponsored research staff numbering 60 FTE. The office has an annual budget of \$7.3 million.

This is an outstanding opportunity for an established research administration leader with a successful track record of supporting cutting-edge research. The ideal candidate will have demonstrated success in both high-level strategic planning and day-to-day execution within a large, complex research-intensive university that has a medical school or an academic medical center. Working with senior leaders, the AVP

will implement effective processes and cultivate transparent, open communication to deliver proactive, user-friendly customer service. These efforts will further bold research initiatives and help maintain compliance across the University. In this role, the AVP will provide strategic leadership to support collaborative research initiatives while creating a work environment that rewards innovation, builds partnerships, encourages and nurtures teamwork and professional growth, and promotes diversity. They will have a thorough understanding of and commitment to best practices within research administration and compliance.

Northwestern University has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist with this vital recruitment effort. Please direct all inquiries and applications as indicated at the end of this document.

DISTINGUISHING RESEARCH

***To pursue the highest degree of research and teaching excellence by
bringing together the world's brightest minds to address critical global
challenges best solved through multidisciplinary, transnational
collaboration.***

-Northwestern University Global Mission

Bold, collaborative discovery is a hallmark of Northwestern University research. The University is dedicated to collaborating with the world's best organizations and scholars to advance cutting-edge research and help solve the most intractable global problems, empowering and supporting faculty, students, and partners to tackle the most pressing challenges. Northwestern faculty are global experts who pursue breakthroughs that strengthen society and increase understanding. Bridging theory and practice, they are senior policy advisers on education, economics, healthcare, energy, security, and more.

About 4,000 tenure-line and full-time faculty call Northwestern home, and over 100 University departments and centers train some 1,000 postdocs, 5,500 graduate students, and 8,500 undergraduate students. In FY 2021 the National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development Survey (NSF HERD) reported \$913 Million in total research expenditures, with the Feinberg School of Medicine representing 70% of all expenditures. HHS/NIH represented approximately 75% of federal funding, with other federal funding sources including NSF (9%), DOD (8%), and DOE (4.9%).

University Research Institutes and Centers (URICs) are a hallmark of Northwestern's world-class research enterprise. Bridging disciplines across school boundaries, URICs are knowledge hubs that spur high-impact, collaborative discovery with great societal benefit. Currently numbering 35, Northwestern's URICs drive research innovation across domains as varied as nanotechnology, the biological and engineering sciences, energy and sustainability, public policy, and more. Visit this link for a full list of URICs and more information about each: <https://research.northwestern.edu/about/institutes-centers/university-research-institutes-centers.html>

University academic units also support school- and unit-based research institutes and centers that are hubs for research and activate multidisciplinary collaborations, allowing faculty to create new knowledge and transfer their expertise and passion for their fields to every student and collaborator they work with as they continue to advance human knowledge. Visit this link for a full list of Northwestern's unit-based research institutes and centers, and more information about each: <https://research.northwestern.edu/about/institutes-centers/school--and-unit-based-institutes-centers.html>

In service to the University's [Global Strategic Plan](#), Northwestern places primary importance on cross-functional collaboration. To coordinate and catalyze activity across the University and around the world to address critical global challenges that cannot be solved from a single disciplinary or geographic perspective, Northwestern's Roberta [Buffett Institute for Global Affairs](#) serves as a hub of connectivity. It fosters collaboration across sectors and traditional silos of expertise, geography, and culture, through transnational research, international education and cultural exchange, and transnational dialog.

U7+ ALLIANCE OF WORLD UNIVERSITIES

The U7+ Alliance of World Universities is the first coalition of university presidents aimed at defining concrete actions universities can take to collectively address global challenges in coordination with government leaders in G7 countries and beyond. Alliance members meet annually to establish a common agenda and identify key areas for coordinated action. Together, U7+ university presidents take stock of their universities' unique civic and social responsibilities and pledge concrete action on behalf of their institutions to address the world's most pressing challenges at local, regional, and global levels.

In 2021, Northwestern University was elected to serve as the [first Secretariat](#) of the U7+ Alliance. During its three-year term, the Secretariat is housed at the [Northwestern Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs](#) and convened a [series of intergenerational roundtables](#) on climate change, the global gender gap, and more. Northwestern leaders and faculty also play a role in each of the alliance's working groups dedicated to fulfilling [U7+ university commitments](#) ranging from improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to developing students' inclusive leadership and global citizenship capacities.

THE OFFICE for RESEARCH

The Office for Research is an integral part of Northwestern's research ecosystem, providing a portfolio of expert services and resources to help advance breakthrough knowledge creation. The office plays a strategic role in developing the best research programs and facilities, attracting exceptional faculty, and helping to administer a portfolio that is set to surpass \$1 billion in annual funding from federal agencies, foundations, and corporations.

The Office supports Northwestern's research success in several ways:

- Providing guidance for administering proposals
- Enabling alignment with best practices in ethical research and safety practices
- Managing space and training in select shared and core facilities
- Bringing academic innovation to market

NORTHWESTERN SPONSORED RESEARCH

Northwestern Sponsored Research is the University's central pre-award and non-financial post-award research administration office and is accountable to the University and external sponsors for compliance, review, advisement, negotiation, approval, and authorization of all sponsored research activity. Specifically, the office is responsible for:

- Effective and timely handling of research proposals
- Preparation, interpretation, negotiation, and execution of agreements on behalf of Northwestern University for projects funded by all sponsor types
- Drafting, negotiating, and executing awards and sub-awards for collaborative research
- Establishment of financial accounts for sponsored projects

The Sponsored Research office supports the sponsored research enterprise via a "capsule" model. Capsules are constituency assignment units that match departmental groups with a specific Sponsored Research team comprised of a dedicated Sponsored Research Officer, an Awards Management Associate, and members of the contracts and subcontracts teams. The Business Systems and Operations team supports capsules across a sponsored project's entire lifecycle. Launched in early 2022, the capsule model provides a tailored, consultative, and collaborative approach to supporting PIs, unit-level research administrators, and other stakeholders.

ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR SPONSORED RESEARCH

As Northwestern University continues to grow and enhance its sponsored research enterprise, the new AVP will play a highly strategic and critical leadership role. Reporting to the Vice President for Research, the AVP is responsible for providing administrative leadership and strategic counsel to all pre-award, sponsored research functions, and is accountable to the university and external sponsors for compliance, review, advisement, negotiation, approval, and authorization of all sponsored research activity. With six direct reports and a team of 60 FTE, the AVP provides overall leadership for Northwestern Sponsored Research and serves as the face of sponsored research both internally and externally. They must stay abreast of all current trends in research administration and compliance, applying innovative thinking to support the robust sponsored research portfolio at the University.

While functioning at both a strategic and operational level, the AVP will further develop, refine, implement, and manage sponsored research administration. With an annual budget of \$7.3 million and in collaboration with the Vice President for Research, the AVP will develop and implement highly effective and efficient internal policies and processes that are aligned with the University's research strategies and that facilitate world-class research. The AVP will develop relevant metrics to measure efficiency, effectiveness, and growth that can be used for reporting and strategic planning purposes.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR SPONSORED RESEARCH

The successful AVP will be someone who can create and sustain a balance between a high level of faculty and staff service, operational efficiency, and a culture of informed, self-directed compliance with institutional and sponsor regulations. Given the overall scale and complexity of Northwestern's research portfolio, it is essential that the AVP be someone who can develop relationships with senior administrators, faculty, and staff. The next AVP will be expected to address several key opportunities and challenges:

Strategically review Sponsored Research structure and operations

The amount of sponsored research in terms of total dollar amount and number of awards at Northwestern University has grown significantly over the last decade. In the past 10 years, overall research funding has increased by more than 100% and is set to surpass the \$1 billion dollar mark during the current fiscal year. It is within this context that the AVP will have the opportunity to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the Office of Sponsored Research to ensure that the office structure and staffing levels support the current volume and breadth of sponsorship opportunities and allow for scalability of the entire operation to accommodate continued growth.

Reinvigorate a culture of collaborative engagement

Due to sponsored research growth at the University, and the recent implementation of the Huron Research Suite for research administration, Northwestern is at an inflection point that offers a unique opportunity for the new AVP to lead, support, and advocate for Sponsored Research staff and to reinvigorate the team and how the unit engages with University stakeholders. The AVP will develop a shared vision for team spirit, collaborative focus, and team advocacy and support, promoting an environment that fosters collaboration, cooperation, respect, and teamwork. They will set service delivery standards by working with Sponsored Research staff, unit-level research administrators, investigators, and other stakeholders to enhance and further a culture of collaborative engagement and the ability to adapt to changing regulations that affect proposal submission and administration. The AVP will continue to nurture and promote a culture of high-quality service to researchers, administrators, and staff that will enhance their productivity while guaranteeing adherence to relevant regulations.

Lead, mentor, and inspire staff

The AVP will create and support an office environment that fosters teamwork, cooperation, respect, and diversity. Through the development and oversight of ongoing staff training, the AVP will foster a user-friendly environment that ensures continuous opportunities for professional development and growth. The AVP will develop and encourage an open and transparent culture that embraces change management and the free exchange of information and ideas. The AVP will set performance standards, assess training, development, and education needs, and ensure that the competencies of Sponsored Research staff are consistent for Northwestern's continued success.

Identify and implement changes to policies, processes, and procedures to support the continued growth of the research enterprise at Northwestern University

Northwestern University recently implemented the Huron Research Suite, a major investment in its research administration infrastructure. The new system went live in April 2023, and the most recent Sponsored Research leader engaged deeply in the process of developing system documentation. With this documentation work completed successfully, the AVP will have the opportunity to leverage the new system to optimize business processes and procedures. There is an opportunity to engage in this work alongside research administration system users across the University to develop nuanced business processes and procedures that allow for the timely submission of sponsored programming proposals, while also supporting the specific needs of investigators, research administration, and other stakeholders.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Competitive candidates for this position will have a proven track record leading research administration within a large, complex university, institute, or center coupled with a broad and deep knowledge of federal, state, and private funding sources as well as regulatory compliance. They will also bring many of the following professional skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- Exceptional leadership including a big-picture, forward-looking, strategic orientation; strong communication skills; a proactive, collaborative style; and the capacity to inspire and motivate others;
- A bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline is required with preference given to candidates with an advanced degree;
- At least eight years of progressively responsible experience in sponsored project administration, and management preferably in a higher education environment that includes a school/college of medicine or in an academic medical center;

- A commitment to diversity, with demonstrated examples of institutional leadership that advance inclusion and diversity;
- An understanding of academic research funding, with a sophisticated grasp of the changing funding landscape;
- The ability to energize audiences, current and potential partners, staff, and faculty; effective public speaking skills; and the ability to communicate about complex research projects to a wide variety of audiences;
- Strong relationship-building and networking skills, with successful experiences reaching out to traditional and non-traditional partners to make critical linkages;
- A collaborative leadership style, with demonstrated facilitation skills and the ability to influence and lead through building strong relationships;
- A tireless advocate for access, interdisciplinary research and teaching, and engagement; and,
- A person of high energy, enthusiastic optimism, and perseverance to bring initiatives to fruition.

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Review of 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 for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/northwestern-university/assistant-vice-president-sponsored-research>. Electronic submission of materials is required.

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Northwestern University is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer of all protected classes, including veterans and individuals with disabilities. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply. As per Northwestern University policy, this position requires a criminal background check. Successful applicants will need to submit to a criminal background check prior to employment.

Appendix

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

In the last three decades, Northwestern University has firmly rooted itself as a preeminent national and global university. Northwestern's ascent into the upper echelon of major research universities has been guided by a series of excellent and long-serving leaders, who have consistently strengthened critical components of the University and enabled world-class faculty, students, and staff to realize the mission of the institution.

Northwestern, a member of the AAU, is one of only four top 10 US universities also ranked in the top 20 in each of the five graduate education categories: Business, Education, Engineering, Law, and Medicine.

Northwestern has a broad array of [12 schools](#), all of which are highly ranked and recognized:

1. Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (1851)
2. Feinberg School of Medicine (1859)
3. Northwestern Pritzker School of Law (1859)
4. Bienen School of Music (1895)
5. School of Communication (1878)
6. Kellogg School of Management (1908)
7. McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science (1909)
8. The Graduate School (1910)
9. Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications (1921)
10. School of Education and Social Policy (1926)
11. School of Professional Studies (1933)
12. Northwestern University in Qatar (2008)

These schools are integrated throughout three campuses – the primary campus in Evanston, on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan; the Chicago campus, in the heart of a world-class city; and the University's first global campus in Doha, Qatar. The University has made major investments in academic excellence that have accelerated the quality of its faculty, programs, and research across the full range of disciplines, and Northwestern has fostered an entrepreneurial environment in which all of its schools have thrived by encouraging, incenting, and enabling decanal leadership.

University administration has moved to strengthen every aspect of research and scholarship at Northwestern, investing in faculty and expanding research space on the Evanston and Chicago campuses by nearly 30 percent over the past 10 years. Sponsored research—just one measure of scholarly excellence—will exceed \$1 billion in the current fiscal year, putting Northwestern among a very small number of private research universities to approach this level.

Northwestern is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive campus community. The four intertwined strands of access, equity, enrichment, and well-being guide the focus of the institution's work through the development and implementation of strategic equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives across the University.

With an endowment of approximately \$16 billion, Northwestern is among the best-endowed institutions in the world. The latest capital campaign, “We Will: The Campaign for Northwestern,” concluded in June 2021, with a total of \$6.1 billion raised from 174,380 donors; when the campaign launched in March 2014 its goal was to raise \$3.75 billion from at least 141,000 donors. The administration’s stewardship of the endowment, paired with a low level of debt relative to endowment, positions Northwestern to continue this upward trajectory.

University Leadership

President

[Michael H. Schill](#) began his tenure as the president of Northwestern in September 2022. Schill came to Northwestern from the University of Oregon, where he served as president since 2015 while holding a tenured faculty appointment in the University of Oregon School of Law. During his tenure at the University of Oregon, he was instrumental in the creation of the Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact. The initiative is specifically designed to fast-track scientific discoveries and the process of turning those discoveries into innovations that improve the quality of life for people in Oregon, the nation, and beyond. He previously served as the Dean and Harry N. Wyatt Professor of Law at the University of Chicago Law School and the Dean of the UCLA School of Law. He is a nationally recognized expert in property law, real estate, low-income housing and land use, and discrimination in the housing market.

Provost

[Kathleen Hagerty](#) assumed the role of Provost on Sept. 1, 2020, after serving as Associate Provost for Faculty during the 2019-20 academic year and previously as Interim Dean of the Kellogg School of Management. Hagerty joined Kellogg more than 30 years ago and holds the First Chicago Professorship in Finance. Hagerty has held numerous leadership positions within Kellogg, including serving two terms as Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Research, two terms as Chair of the Finance Department and two years as Faculty Director of Kellogg’s Ph.D. programs. She also is responsible for the development of several successful academic programs that foster partnerships across the University. Hagerty has studied the micro-structure of securities markets, disclosure regulation, insider trading regulation and the effectiveness of self-regulatory organizations.