



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SEARCH FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CLIMATE SYSTEMS ENGINEERING INITIATIVE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, PHYSICAL SCIENCES DIVISION
CHICAGO, IL

THE SEARCH

The University of Chicago's new Climate Systems Engineering initiative (CSEi) seeks nominations and applications for the position of Executive Director (ED). The Executive Director will report directly to CSEi's founding Faculty Director, Professor David Keith, and will play a leading role in the conception and organization of this exciting and novel initiative. The ED will develop and grow all aspects of this initiative at the University while also serving as a thought partner to the faculty director and faculty leadership. Joining CSEi at the ground floor, the ED will play a crucial role in ensuring the broader impact and effectiveness of this trailblazing initiative.

Climate systems engineering is an important emerging multidisciplinary field of study at the intersection of environmental geoscience, applied engineering, and public policy posing bold questions about how human technological interventions could slow or potentially reverse the harmful effects of climate change. CSEi's scope includes solar geoengineering from modification to surface albedo to space-based systems; open-systems carbon removal such as enhanced rock weathering and the direct addition of alkalinity to the ocean; and local interventions to reduce glacial melting. Disciplinary research will be complemented by systems analysis including techno-economic assessment, decision and risk analysis, and integrated assessment. CSEi will recruit and engage faculty studying these research areas and will also engage experts within and beyond the university to study the knotty social, ethical, legal, and political challenges of such interventions.

Through its ambitious research efforts, CSEi will leverage the University of Chicago's deep academic resources and embody the University's commitment to pressing innovation as it strives to become a world-class, high-impact research initiative. To this end, foundational goals of the initiative include defining the field of climate systems engineering, quantifying the uncertainty posed by climate engineering techniques, and accelerating the globalization of CSEi research by building deep, technical research collaborations with researchers abroad.

The Executive Director will work closely with the initiative's faculty director and the executive committee to articulate and advance CSEi's strategic vision and ambitious goals. They will be a creative and organized builder as they design and implement the systems and infrastructure needed to carry out the initiative's

vision, including, but not limited to hiring and overseeing a team of staff, developing policies and procedures for faculty recruitment, communications and marketing, events and programming, and space planning. Leveraging a collaborative approach, strong communication, and proactive relationship building skills, the ED will navigate the University's unique institutional culture that upholds rigorous research and challenging ideas to facilitate multidisciplinary partnerships and synergies across the institution. The ED will also reach beyond the University to forge and facilitate connections with external partners in governments, civil society organizations, and industry to elevate CSEI's visibility and advance research and policy efforts related to the intersection of technological and social aspects of climate change.

The University of Chicago has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago is one of the world's preeminent universities, known for its excellent faculty, increasingly diverse student body, distinctive urban campus with strong community connections, and a robust global presence. More than 90 Nobel laureates are associated with the University, including seven current faculty members. The University is home to more than 3,000 faculty and academic personnel, and students from all 50 states and over 120 countries. More than 7,000 students are enrolled in its undergraduate College and nearly 10,500 are enrolled in its graduate and professional schools and special programs. The College is notable for its core curriculum, which is considered the most expansive among highly ranked American colleges.

With an educational impact reaching far beyond the classroom, the University operates a major medical center, the nation's largest academic press, two national laboratories (the Argonne National Laboratory and Fermilab-Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory), the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, the renowned N-12 Laboratory Schools that have led many innovations in education, and four charter school campuses on the South Side of Chicago. The University also runs centers and campuses in Beijing, Delhi, Hong Kong, London, and Paris, enabling an expansion of opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate globally.

As an urban research university that has driven new ways of thinking since its inception in 1890, the University's faculty, students, and staff share one common purpose that is clear and widely understood: to be one of the world's most important and impactful institutes of higher education. This goal is realized through scholarship, research, teaching, and engagement. Central to the University's identity is its commitment to fostering an environment that allows for the [free exchange of ideas](#) through informed dialogue and debate.

ACADEMICS

The University of Chicago is home to some of the most venerated [academic programs](#) in the world, having established the fields of ecology and sociology, the first graduate international affairs program in the country, and the first executive MBA program. The University's unique approach to education transforms individuals, preparing and empowering students to make positive impacts on the world. Academic programming at the University spans the undergraduate College (which offers 52 majors and 41 minors), five graduate divisions (biological sciences, humanities, molecular engineering, physical sciences, social sciences), six professional schools (Booth School of Business, Divinity School, Harris School of Public Policy Studies, Law School, Pritzker School of Medicine, and Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice), and the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies, each of which promotes an atmosphere of close collaboration among students and professors.

RESEARCH

With a commitment to free and open inquiry, the University of Chicago's scholars take an interdisciplinary approach to research that spans arts to engineering, medicine to education. With more than 140 [institutes and centers](#), the University transforms the way in which others understand the world, advancing fields of study and often creating new ones. Generating new knowledge for the benefit of present and future generations, the University's research efforts have had an impact around the globe, leading to such breakthroughs as discovering the link between cancer and genetics, establishing revolutionary theories of economics, and developing tools to produce reliably excellent urban schooling.

CLIMATE SYSTEMS ENGINEERING INITIATIVE

The University of Chicago has committed to prioritizing and advancing broad, multidisciplinary climate and energy research in a way that embodies the institution's distinctive culture of rigorous, innovative research and robust, uninhibited discourse. The new [Climate Systems Engineering \(CSE\) initiative](#), and the recruitment of David Keith as its faculty director, represents a bold step towards realizing this vision.

While CSEi will be housed in the Physical Sciences Division (PSD), the initiative is intended to be a multidisciplinary effort, spanning the University's schools and divisions. Broadly conceived, the initiative will support and convene research in fields including but not limited to engineering, physical and biological sciences, social sciences, and humanistic approaches to behavioral science and ethics. The initiative will focus on recruiting and bringing together a multi-disciplinary and highly collaborative group of faculty and researchers dedicated to the same set of fundamental questions related to the mitigation of the impact of climate change. The initiative's goals and scope will be closely informed by a cross-disciplinary faculty advisory committee that will help develop and refine the goals. The CSEi will also leverage the global network and presence of the University of Chicago with key partnerships across the world.

The unique challenge posed by climate change draws on fundamental elements of science, economics, policy, and technology. CSEi focuses on the intersection of technological and social aspects of the challenge of reducing and perhaps reversing the harms from climate change, including fundamental research related to technologies in a number of key areas such as carbon dioxide removal, geo-engineering, solar radiation management.

Founding Faculty Director Professor David Keith

David Keith is a Professor in the Department of Geophysical Sciences at the University of Chicago and the Founding Faculty Director of the Climate Systems Engineering initiative.

Keith previously served as the Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Physics at the Harvard University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and as Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. He led the development of Harvard's [Solar Geoengineering Research Program](#).

His work has ranged from the climatic impacts of large-scale wind power to elicitation of expert judgments about climate. Keith's hardware engineering projects include the first interferometer for atoms, a high-accuracy infrared spectrometer for NASA's ER-2 and the development of a stratospheric propelled balloon experiment for solar geoengineering. He is also the founder of [Carbon Engineering](#), a company developing technology to capture CO₂ from ambient air and the author of *A Case for Climate Engineering* (MIT Press, 2013).

CSEi Executive Committee

Working closely with faculty director David Keith, the CSEi executive committee will steer and support the initiative, playing a lead role in its decision-making. The initial foci of the committee will be:

- Engaging the University of Chicago community.
- Planning for near-term faculty recruitment.
- Developing a strategic plan for the first three years of CSEi.

Five University of Chicago faculty members make up the executive committee:

- David Archer, Professor of Geophysical Sciences
- Michael Greenstone, Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics, the College, and the Harris School; Director of the Becker Friedman Institute; Director of the Energy Policy Institute at Chicago (EPIC)
- Robert Rosner, William E. Wrather Distinguished Service professor, Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Department of Physics, Enrico Fermi Institute, and the College; Founding Co-Director of the Energy Policy Institute
- Stewart Rowan, Barry L. MacLean Professor of Molecular Engineering and Professor of Chemistry

- Tiffany Shaw, Associate Professor, Geophysical Sciences

THE ROLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CLIMATE SYSTEMS ENGINEERING INITIATIVE

Reporting to Professor David Keith, Faculty Director of CSEi, the Executive Director will be a senior staff leader focused on helping to lead, develop, and manage the emerging initiative in Climate Systems Engineering. The ED will play a leadership role in the conception and organization of CSEi, utilizing expertise in the field of climate and environmental science and policy to help develop and grow all aspects of the program at the University. To support the faculty and activities of the initiative, the ED will hire and supervise key managerial positions, including a Policy & Outreach Director, a Director of Research Development, and an Associate Director for Administration, in addition to other critical staff roles. Working with their team, the ED will help oversee the development and growth of the initiative including managing operational and administrative aspects of the program such as space planning, proposal development, support for fundraising, events, visitors and postdoc appointments, and other operations. It will be particularly important that the Executive Director serve as an intellectual thought partner to the faculty director, ensuring that the broader impact of the initiative's research and collaborative efforts are effectively communicated to a broad range of audiences both internal and external to the University.

Job Responsibilities:

- Leads and directs the operations and strategy of the new Climate Systems Engineering initiative, directing the planning and execution of key priorities, leading cross-functional projects involving professional staff, and working collaboratively with key leaders across the University to effectively implement the goals of this new initiative.
- Supports the CSEi executive committee in developing and executing strategies in community engagement, faculty recruitment, and priority setting efforts.
- Directs the organizational design of the new initiative to ensure professional staff and managers are hired in alignment with the goals and strategies identified by the faculty advisory committee.
- Advances efforts to inform U.S. public policymakers on climate systems engineering research, including shaping and implementing a CSEi public policy strategy; collaborating with experienced advisors and advocacy organizations to gain advice, share insights, and build partnerships; participating in meetings with elected officials, staffers, advocacy organizations, and advisors; authoring written materials; and managing ongoing relationships and outreach.
- Leads the program's communications work, in close collaboration with the Energy Policy Institute (EPIC) and key University leadership to align messaging and take advantage of all available channels.
- Supervises and directs staff activity including writing and editing publications (op-eds, blog posts, program materials and handouts) and other written materials, as well as launching and directing the CSEi website and social media platforms.

- Oversees all administrative and financial activities of CSEi including grants management, fundraising logistics, budgeting, space planning, human resources, operations, communications, and risk management. Guides the financial strategy for the initiative, including working with financial administrators to monitor accounts, analyze financial data, and inform strategic decisions about spending.
- Collaborates with various academic departments across the University to support the recruitment of faculty, ensuring compliance with University policies and procedures.
- Supports efforts to develop and execute fundraising strategies for the program in collaboration with the University's development officers.
- Represents the CSEi within the University and to external stakeholders.
- Conceives of, develops and directs staff to execute events including organization, communication, and management of logistics.
- Facilitates research projects when needed, including reviewing and editing content; participating in research discussions; and supporting a variety of other tasks.

In addition to these specific job responsibilities listed above, this role also will involve standard duties:

- Provides leadership for a Center with senior management and serves as a liaison to academic departments, professional organizations and administrative units of the University.
- Works closely with faculty, students and other leaders across campus to foster experimentation and multi-disciplinary inquiry and teaching by coordinating and developing Center programming. This may include workshops. Conferences, colloquia, training programs, community outreach, etc.
- Performs other related work as needed.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The Executive Director will join CSEi in its earliest moments and will work to address the following opportunities and challenges to position the initiative for success:

Articulate and advance CSEi's strategic vision

The Executive Director will exhibit a qualitative spirit and entrepreneurial mindset, identifying ways to support CSEi in becoming a preeminent leader in the field of climate systems engineering. The Executive Director will work closely with the Faculty Director and Executive Committee to help define and implement the initiative's goals, and, as one of UChicago's research pillars, ensure the initiative's alignment with the University's broader commitment to climate and clean energy efforts. To accomplish its vision, the Executive Director will provide structure and guidance to CSEi's pursuit of new programmatic endeavors, recruitment of key staff members, execution of funded programs, and investments in labs and infrastructure as well as identifying opportunities for cross-cutting and collaborative research endeavors. The Executive Director will also support the Executive Committee's work in faculty recruitment by

populating a database of leading researchers in relevant fields whose expertise would offer complimentary pathways of research exploration.

Facilitate creative partnerships in the unique UChicago ecosystem

The Executive Director will have an appreciation and intellectual curiosity for UChicago's inquisitive spirit and academic rigor and will help advance the vibrant culture of interdisciplinary research and partnerships that span the departments, labs, Schools, and Colleges of the University. They will act as a bridge builder, promoting the research and interests of the initiative's faculty and leveraging the vast resources available at UChicago to promote opportunities for collaboration with new and existing partners across campus and beyond. The Executive Director will work to coordinate activities and align the strategic vision of CSEi with other units of expertise such as the Energy Policy Institute (EPIC) and Argonne National Laboratory to further the impact of the initiative's work.

Elevate the visibility of CSEi's research efforts among key stakeholders

Operating at the emerging intersection of environmental geosciences and applied engineering, CSEi has an opportunity to utilize the resources and support of the University to define the field and accelerate the globalization of high-impact applied research in climate systems engineering. The Executive Director will be charged with elevating the visibility of the work of CSEi's faculty and generating interest in the initiative's efforts among relevant researchers, policymakers, donors, and government officials both nationally and internationally. The Executive Director will act as a representative for the initiative and present a strong communication and engagement strategy that will culminate in convenings with advocacy and research organizations to shape and inform public policy efforts in climate science. The Executive Director will also work closely with the University's development arm to support CSEi's fundraising and sustainability efforts.

Build and manage the initiative's administration and infrastructure

The Executive Director will be charged with building CSEi's full administrative and structural capacity, including the development and oversight of its critical HR functions. As an administrator, they will work to ensure that the initiative is operating in continued alignment with its academic vision, particularly during its early years, as the initiative develops structure. It will be important for the Executive Director to engage in continued collaboration with other relevant administrative units across the University as needed to support CSEi's work.

Recruit, retain, and develop exceptional staff

CSEi is projected to experience rapid growth in its research and programmatic efforts in the next few years, which will require significant administrative heft to be successful. The Executive Director will have a keen eye for identifying and developing a pool of talented staff, both internal and external to the

University, that are capable of executing the initiative's vision while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and team support. The Executive Director will be a superb manager of people and resources, deploying both deftly to support the deepening of CSEI's research excellence through the staff's effective management and administration of its operations.

EXPERIENCE, SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

While no single candidate will likely have all the ideal qualifications, candidates should possess many of the following qualifications and competencies:

Required Qualifications

Education:

- Minimum requirements include a college or university degree in a related field.

Experience:

- Minimum requirements include knowledge and skills developed through 7+ years of work experience in a related job discipline.

Preferred Qualifications

Education:

- Advanced degree in a related field.

Experience:

- Professional experience in environmental public policy. This may include work in a senior role at a major environmental group or legislative staff; program management in government or environmental industry; or work in a university-based research center that involves a substantial applied policy component. Candidates from other backgrounds may be considered if they possess the skills and experience to shape a start-up enterprise and rapidly learn a new field.
- Familiarity with academia.
- Proven track record of managing institutional growth and change, leading staff, and developing partnerships with key stakeholders within and outside the organization.
- Demonstrated experience in general management, strategic planning, sponsored research administration, and financial analysis and reporting.
- Demonstrated strong organizational and communications skills.
- Experience serving as an expert source of information, with a collaborative and flexible style.
- Strong problem-solving skills that support and enable sound decision-making.
- Ability to work collaboratively across all levels of an organization.

Preferred Competencies

- Outstanding interpersonal skills including the ability to resolve problems with a high degree of discretion, diplomacy, and tact.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to clearly communicate to a diverse audience including students, faculty, donors, and staff.
- Ability to coordinate with many partner offices simultaneously to innovatively problem solve on behalf of students and staff.
- Superior organizational skills and constant attention to detail.
- Ability to work independently, with guidance in only the most complex situations.
- Commitment to excellent customer service, including tact, discretion, and proper judgement as necessary.
- Expertise to collect and maintain a vast array of records to improve organizational knowledge and datapoints.

Working Conditions

- This position is eligible for a partially remote work schedule.
- This position requires occasional work on evenings and weekends.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team via the link below.

Dan Rodas, Partner
Damla Williams, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-chicago/executive-director-climate-systems-engineering-initiative>

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Staff Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should call 773-702-5800 or submit a request via [Applicant Inquiry Form](#).

We seek a diverse pool of applicants who wish to join an academic community that places the highest value on rigorous inquiry and encourages a diversity of perspectives, experiences, groups of individuals, and ideas to inform and stimulate intellectual challenge, engagement, and exchange.