

Position and Candidate Specification



Texas Tech University

Vice President for Research & Innovation

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October 2025

Assignment: 14247-002

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Texas Tech University unites over a century of tradition with bold ambition for the future. As a comprehensive research institution with global reach, Texas Tech is building momentum toward membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU), reflecting its commitment to advancing discovery, innovation, and societal impact. Located in Lubbock, Texas (pop. 272,086), the university is home to more than 42,000 students enrolled in over 150 undergraduate, 100 graduate, and 50 doctoral programs. Texas Tech's distinguished faculty are recognized nationally and internationally for their teaching, research, and creative activity.

Research growth is at the heart of Texas Tech's trajectory. The university has achieved record levels of research awards and expenditures, supported by targeted investments in interdisciplinary initiatives, strategic research themes, and advanced facilities. Texas Tech fosters collaboration across disciplines, cultivating solutions to global challenges while maintaining strong ties to its West Texas roots.

Texas Tech's culture of access and excellence extends beyond research. More than 75 percent of students come from beyond a 300-mile radius, and the number of first-generation students has doubled in the past decade. With \$230 million offered annually in scholarships and grants, along with innovative affordability programs, Texas Tech opens doors for students to pursue knowledge and discovery.

As Texas Tech accelerates its research enterprise and builds on a strong foundation of teaching and service, the university is positioned to achieve its AAU aspirations and further solidify its place among the nation's premier research institutions.

TEXAS TECH'S RECENT MOMENTUM

- The recent establishment of the [Texas University Fund \(TUF\)](#), a state-sponsored \$3.9 billion endowment to support research activities, has expanded Texas Tech's innovation and technology capacity and further cements its strong relationship with the state. TUF funding has enabled Texas Tech to hire and support faculty, prepare students for the workforce through expanded graduate and undergraduate research opportunities, and create new technological innovations that will benefit the citizens of Texas.
- Building on the university's \$289M in total research expenditures (FY25), Texas Tech researchers continue the institution's tradition of supporting national security interests through [projects that include one of the largest grants](#) in Whitacre College history, a newly [forged partnership with the FBI](#), and [the naming of the Texas Tech University Reese National Security Complex](#) that positions the university as a critical partner in addressing some of the most pressing national security challenges.
- Through a groundbreaking memorandum of understanding announced in January of 2025, [Texas Tech, Abilene Christian University, Natura Resources, and the Texas Produced Water Consortium](#) are advancing molten salt reactor technology to address Texas's most pressing water and energy challenges.
- For the third consecutive year, the National Academy of Inventors has named Texas Tech to its [Top 100 U.S. Universities Granted Utility Patents List](#).
- Texas Tech's [longstanding partnership with BASF](#) remains one of the most impactful research collaborations in university history.
- Gordon Davis' recent [\\$44M gift to name the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources](#), the largest in the school's history, has helped position the university on the cutting edge of agricultural research and launch transformative initiatives such as the newly established [Institute of Genomics for Crop Abiotic Stress Tolerance](#).
- Examples of the successes and impact of Texas Tech's leading faculty and researchers abound. Select recent highlights include [Indrajit Srivastava's tumor models](#), [Changzhi Li's A F Harvey Engineering Research Prize](#), [Luis Herrera-Estrella's National Academy of Science recognition](#), and [Seiichi Nagihara's heat-flow probe](#).

At a moment of unprecedented opportunity in its already impressive trajectory, Texas Tech University (TTU) seeks a Vice President for Research & Innovation (VPRI) to advance impact and excellence across the breadth of the university's research enterprise. The VPRI will harness Texas Tech's recent momentum to foster a culture of innovation that serves and effectively engages faculty, researchers, students, and staff in pursuit of the university's significant aspirations.

As Texas Tech's principal research officer, the VPRI reports directly to the President and serves as a member of the President's cabinet. Working collaboratively across the research enterprise, the VPRI is responsible for developing a dynamic strategic plan to advance the university's top tier research status; fostering collaboration across the university and System to enhance cooperative, interdisciplinary research programs and opportunities; developing new and nurturing existing external partnerships that maximize Texas Tech's research resources; promoting and supporting a culture that values compliance with all regulatory bodies; developing strategies for the investment of institutional resources in research; fostering a culture of safety; and managing all resources associated with the Office of Research & Innovation. The VPRI is responsible for the administration, management, and planning of the university's policies, programs, and services within the assigned area(s). All activities are performed under the administration of the President.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to President Lawrence Schovanec

Direct reports Assistant Vice President, Research Development, Research Communications & Strategic Research
Assistant Vice President for Finance & Administration
Associate Vice President for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Associate Vice President for Research (2)
Associate Vice President for Responsible Research
Senior Associate Vice President for Research Operations
Executive Director of Executive Operations

Other key relationships Provost and Senior Vice President
Deans
Senior Leadership (including Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, VP for National Security, VP for Advancement, and VP for Marketing & Communications)
Board of Regents
Key community partners and elected officials

OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT VPRI

The VPRI role represents an unparalleled opportunity for a distinguished scholar-leader to join a well-regarded university that has been on the rise, at an inflection point in its growth trajectory. With significant support from the state, demonstrated by its recent partnership in TUF, and clear strategic buy-in across the institution to

achieve AAU status, there is an optimistic, tangible, and actionable buzz around the opportunities for the incoming VPRI. This leader will partner across the institution amongst the following areas of opportunity and responsibility:

- **Strategic Vision:**
 - Define and communicate a bold research agenda that leverages Texas Tech's student-centric culture, regional strengths, and AAU aspirations.
 - Translate vision into actionable strategies, measurable goals, and sustainable infrastructure, engaging faculty and leadership across disciplines.
- **Leveraging Momentum:**
 - Build on TTU's recent investments and upward trajectory to expand research capacity, diversify funding, and accelerate interdisciplinary growth.
 - Foster partnerships with government, industry, and alumni to advance innovation, workforce development, and community impact.
- **Champion of Collaboration:**
 - Foster a culture of inclusion and collaboration, ensuring that all disciplines across campus are engaged in the research mission.
 - Build bridges across administrative units, unify stakeholders around shared goals and drive transformative change. Champion clear and consistent communication, and cultivate an environment of trust and transparency.
- **Infrastructure and Operational Excellence:**
 - Modernize research infrastructure and streamline administrative processes to empower faculty and staff.
 - Prioritize talent recruitment, retention, and professional development, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment.
 - Seek and be responsive to input from faculty and staff about the needs, conditions and approaches that may further facilitate research enterprise at Texas Tech.
- **Advocacy and External Engagement**
 - Serve as a visible ambassador, advocating for TTU's research mission at the state, federal, and community levels.
 - Navigate the political landscape with diplomacy, promoting TTU's strengths and securing resources for long-term success.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The Office of Research & Innovation (OR&I) supports a culture of creativity, discovery, innovation, and collaboration, empowering Texas Tech University to become an elite national research university. According to its mission statement:

"The Office of Research & Innovation facilitates excellent research, scholarship, and creative activities for all and promotes an academic environment embracing curiosity, innovation, debate, diversity, ethics, and integrity. The Office supports responsible and safe conduct of research, faculty development and recognition, interdisciplinary

collaborations, externally sponsored research, partnerships with industry and community, and translation of research discoveries for the benefit of society."

The OR&I comprises of the Office of Research Commercialization, Office of Research Development & Communications, Strategic Research Intelligence, Office of Research Services, the Innovation Hub at Research Park, Research Facilities, Responsible Conduct of Research, Environmental Health & Safety, and Export Control & Security.

Texas Tech is home to over [70 research centers and institutes](#). The OR&I supports these entities by fostering meaningful partnerships and collaborations, connecting researchers with core facilities, disseminating research through various scholarly magazines and journals, and ensuring that researchers are using best safety practices and remain in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Office supports both Centers and Institutes and individual faculty scholars in identifying external funding sources and preparing competitive proposals through its **Office of Research Intelligence** and **Office of Research Development**. The **Office of Research Services** assists researchers in completing externally sponsored project proposals and contracts, and is the unit responsible for submitting all proposals on behalf of Texas Tech. The **Office of Research Communication** coordinates the public dissemination of institutional research accomplishments, such as [being named to the Top 100 U.S. Universities Granted Utility Patents List](#), in collaboration with Texas Tech's Vice President for Marketing & Communications.

The **Office of Research Integrity** supports researcher compliance with federal regulations and sponsor regulatory requirements; provides oversight and support for regulated research activities (human and animal studies, and studies involving chemical, biological, and radiation hazards); oversees university safety and occupational safety programs; supports conflict of interest management for researchers; and investigates allegations of research misconduct. The **Office of Export Controls & Security** provides support to faculty engaged in classified and sensitive research, acts as a liaison to federal sponsors on security issues, supports the development and implementation of technology control plans, and helps coordinate background checks on faculty, staff, and student researchers who are not U.S. citizens. This partnership was integral to securing the university's [recent multimillion-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Energy](#), highlighting Texas Tech's continued ascent as a leader in national security.

One way the OR&I supports innovation is through its [Innovation Hub](#) at Research Park. Known as "The Hub," the 40,000-square-foot, \$29 million facility opened in the fall of 2015. The Hub supports economic growth across the state and region by fostering public-private partnerships and providing a space for the entrepreneurial community to learn and launch start-ups. The Hub and its leadership team accomplish this mission collaboratively, working with all System stakeholders, the business community, and federal and state leaders. A multi-disciplinary approach to academics, co-curricular programs, research projects, and a world-class LEED-certified facility form the foundation for building a knowledge-based economy.

The Office of Research & Innovation also houses the **Office of Research Commercialization (ORC)**, a shared service reporting to the VPRI, which helps move research discoveries from Texas Tech University and Texas Tech University System from the laboratory to the marketplace. The ORC identifies commercially viable inventions, provides technology assessments, protects intellectual property through patents and copyrights, leverages marketing and industry connections to translate research, and offers licensing and legal services. ORC collaborates with researchers and business partners to help translate Texas Tech innovations into commercial applications and successfully bring them to market.

The Office of Research & Innovation also includes the Research & Innovation Ambassadors (RIA) council, composed of Associate Deans for Research and a representative from the Faculty Senate. The VPRI also has a [Faculty Advisory Council \(FAC\)](#) composed of nine rotating representatives from colleges across the institution. Both the RIA and FAC assist the VPRI and the university in advancing strategic priorities related to research, creative activity, and scholarship, particularly in alignment with the Strategic Plan for Texas Tech and the Strategic Plan for Research. The FAC represents the faculty interests and advises the VPRI on issues affecting faculty research productivity, including OR&I policies, operations, and initiatives. The FAC also plays an oversight role in evaluating university research Centers and Institutes, as well as strategic research initiatives.

Additional information about Texas Tech University and the Office of Research & Innovation can be found [here](#).



Texas Tech University seeks an innovative, strategic, and organizationally savvy leader with substantial experience managing an operationally complex institution through change. The next Vice President for Research & Innovation will be responsible for developing a compelling vision to amplify Texas Tech's culture of research excellence and competitive innovation. Leading through influence and collaboration, the VPRI will champion ambition and excellence, foster interdisciplinary initiatives, and generate excitement, enthusiasm, and buy-in to advance the educational and research missions of Texas Tech University.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Ideal candidates will have demonstrated experience in many of the following areas:

- A **terminal degree**, along with relevant **leadership experience advancing research** at a research-intensive university or institute, with a **record of distinguished scholarship and funded research**.
- Proven track record of **supporting technology transfer, commercialization, and industry partnerships**.
- A history of **promoting research interests and collaborations across an institution** or System and with external partners.
- Keen **understanding of federal funding processes**, advocacy, and compliance.
- A leadership style characterized by the highest **personal integrity and ethics, transparency, accessibility, and openness to a team-centered environment**.
- An enthusiasm for collaborating with other departments and infrastructure development with multiple siloed constituencies; **demonstrated capacity to create cross-campus partnerships**.
- A **demonstrated ability to mentor and support staff and provide successful development of people**; a track record for inspiring a diverse staff with energy and dedication to their professional advancement, as well as commitment to clarity and accountability.
- A track record of **effective oversight of budgets, infrastructure, and space** of commensurate complexity and scope.
- A **commitment to service** coupled with excellent interpersonal skills.
- **Outstanding communication skills**, demonstrated by the ability to interact comfortably with a wide range of diverse people.
- **The ability to obtain Personnel Industrial Security Clearance** by the Department of Defense is required.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Strategic Thinking

Capitalize on the momentum and success of Texas Tech's research enterprise and contribute to the university's overall excellence by:

- Serving as a strong advocate for Texas Tech's research mission, strengthening the university's capacity to address changes in research priorities, regulation, compliance, and global and industry challenges.
- Having accessibility and open-mindedness across disciplines and units, with substantial "research cultural awareness" to navigate the vision and strategy in a dynamic environment.

- Understanding challenges and opportunities facing all campus units while appropriately balancing resources and attention across the whole research enterprise.

Change Leadership

To pursue excellence in research and innovation, the VPRI will:

- Bring visionary leadership to the office, growing and organizing the office to best support the development, promotion, and application of Texas Tech's intellectual property and its researchers, students, and facilities.
- Establish processes and practices to encourage and reinforce innovation. Lead change consistent with university strategy and gain buy-in with key constituents.
- Set clear goals and create a culture celebrating positive change and experimentation, engaging people in a reasoned way.
- Be persistent in the pursuit of institutional priorities and strategic direction.

Collaborating and Influencing

In an institution that values shared governance and community, build consensus and support by:

- Serving as an intellectual leader among the faculty and displaying the highest aspirations in developing and fulfilling the University's research mission.
- Collaborating with faculty, deans, the president, provost, and other colleagues across the University,
- Building partnerships and enhancing Texas Tech's presence and reputation among other universities and research institutions, key regional contacts, industry partners, and funding sponsors.
- Being the enabler, ambassador, convener, and advocate for research at Texas Tech, putting the institution definitively 'on the map.'

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Intellectually curious.
- Excellent communication skills, strong listener. An enabler.
- Focus on action, even in the face of ambiguity and complexity.
- Transparent, authentic leader with high integrity.
- Persuasive and persistent.

THE SEARCH PROCESS

Spencer Stuart, a global executive search and leadership advisory firm, has been retained by Texas Tech to help identify and recruit the new Vice President for Research & Innovation. For confidential nominations and expressions of interest, please contact Spencer Stuart at TTUVPRI@spencerstuart.com.