Northwestern University seeks to appoint a Vice President for Research to provide vision and leadership in supporting and enhancing excellence across a broad, diverse, and increasingly cross-disciplinary research enterprise. Northwestern’s research portfolio has this year surpassed $800M in funding and is expected soon to top $1B. To address the consequences of this rapid growth in terms of support resources and infrastructure, policy, and strategy, and to anticipate future needs as this growth continues, the Vice President for Research will develop, socialize, and implement a comprehensive vision for support services, infrastructure, strategic investments, and policy across the University’s schools, colleges, centers, and institutes. The Vice President for Research reports to the Provost of the University and is a member of the President’s Senior Staff.
Founded in 1851, Northwestern University is committed to innovation and excellence in teaching and research and to the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community. Northwestern combines the strengths of a highly ranked research university with the intimacy of a liberal-arts college, the creative energy of arts and music conservatories, the rich diversity of an international institution, exceptional professional schools, and the excitement of a Big Ten athletic program. The University draws strength from a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary culture that drives pioneering research and discovery.

Northwestern enrolls approximately 21,000 students (about 8,000 are undergraduates with the rest in graduate and professional schools), supports some 900 post-doctoral fellows and 1,200 medical residents and fellows, and employs approximately 3,800 full-time faculty and 7,500 full- and part-time staff. The University’s 12 schools and colleges are located on three campuses — Chicago, Evanston, and Doha, Qatar.

The NORTHWESTERN WILL strategic plan and the We Will campaign, which launched publicly in 2014, focus on four areas critical to the University’s future: discovering creative solutions; integrating learning and experience; connecting our community; and engaging with the world. The development of the plan identified Northwestern’s areas of greatest strength in which the University will invest substantial resources because they are the areas where it can have the greatest impact. The campaign has already surpassed its $3.75B goal by $750M and is on track to generate $5B in gifts by the time it concludes.

Northwestern is committed to creating a vibrant and inclusive ecosystem for discovery that supports exceptional faculty, students, and staff. This ecosystem, with its pioneering spirit, tradition of innovation, and culture of bold, collaborative discovery, has solidified Northwestern’s place among the nation’s premier private research universities.

The Office for Research (OR), led by the Vice President for Research, plays a key role in achieving the University’s objectives by working with faculty and University leadership to refine the strategy and implement the tactics necessary to meet its goals. The mission of OR is to provide researchers with the resources and services that are necessary to pursue their goals with an emphasis on bridging disciplines and with an increasingly international scope of activity. OR leaders and staff are dedicated to supporting the entrepreneurial activity of faculty and student researchers in advancing the frontiers of their fields.

Over the last several years, OR has taken many steps to evolve in sync with Northwestern’s research growth and to continue to foster and support that growth as well as the diversification of funding sources that has been part of it. A 2017 program review conducted by a panel of peer Vice Presidents for Research commended OR’s many strengths and identified opportunities for the organization to develop additional capacity to efficiently support the ongoing growth of Northwestern’s research enterprise. A central observation of this report, borne out by researchers and support staff across the University, is that the rapid growth of the research enterprise has placed pressure on the Office for Research as well as other
university resources, outstripping OR’s capacity to support researchers while maintaining institutional compliance.

THE POSITION

In the context of Northwestern’s established and emerging strengths, responding to the impact of rapid growth, and embracing the opportunity to design the support infrastructure of a billion-dollar research program, the Vice President for Research (“VP-R”) will bring a comprehensive and strategic vision for the support services Northwestern researchers need to thrive.

The VP-R leads a central service organization that fosters, enables, and supports research across all of Northwestern’s schools and colleges as well as its centers and institutes. Delivering excellent, efficient, and effective operational service and support, providing expert guidance on policy, counseling University leaders on research strategy, and ensuring institutional compliance are all areas of focus and dimensions of success for the VP-R and for the Office for Research that they lead.

Northwestern looks to its Office for Research to provide best-in-class service and expertise across the following spectrum of activities:

- All aspects of central, enterprise-wide support services to enable research and protect the University, its researchers, and research participants:
  - Development and submission of grant and contract proposals
  - Pre- and post-award non-financial management
  - Human and animal research protections
  - Institutional research safety
  - Conflict of interest in research activities
  - Responsible conduct of research
  - Export controls and other federal restrictions on research materials and information

- Managing Northwestern’s intellectual property and technology transfer activities including its commercialization through both established and new companies

- Administrative support for a wide array of university research institutes and centers (“URIC’s”)

The VP-R ensures that OR has an appropriate organizational structure, with effective delegation to empowered senior-level staff who are experts in their areas and a culture that emphasizes service to researchers, collaboration, teamwork, innovation, and accountability. The OR administrative group provides financial, human-resource, technology, and general business-services support for OR. Approximately 770 full-time employees of the University work in the Office for Research. Its expense budget is approximately $135M.
The VP-R reports to the Provost of the University and is a member of the President’s Senior Staff. The VP-R works closely with deans and their associate deans for research as well as with the Senior Vice President for Finance & Administration, who oversees central finance, facilities, human-resource, and business services. In addition, the VP-R works in partnership with the VPIT on delivery of research administration and computing technology services and support.

Going forward, the VP-R will expand the use of data, metrics, and other analytic and reporting tools to understand the University’s research enterprise in more detail, to guide decisions about investment and ongoing support, and to inform decisions about the development and utilization of facilities and other University resources for research. In this vein, the VP-R will contribute to the work of the Provost’s Research Space Advisory Council, an initiative conceived to enable more strategic allocation of existing space across the University and to guide discussions and planning around new capital investments. The Research Space Advisory Council is characteristic of the more strategic and data-based management of institutional resources that Northwestern leadership is implementing. The VP-R will join in, contribute to, and be responsible for extending such approaches across OR in service to the University’s researchers, partners, and sponsors.

The VP-R will present periodically to committees of the Board of Trustees including the Committee on Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

For more information about research at Northwestern, visit http://www.research.northwestern.edu.

QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Vice President for Research will possess a broad grasp of science and science policy, the gravitas to build and sustain peer relationships with an eminent faculty, and the ability to lead a large administrative service organization in support of a central mission area of an AAU institution. They will have had a successful career as a researcher and will want to turn (or will have already turned) to championing others’ research. They will be an action-oriented leader who nonetheless consults judiciously and who balances institutional and individual considerations. They will hold themselves and their organization accountable for supporting and enabling research excellence.

Committed to supporting research across all 12 Northwestern schools and encourage interdisciplinary and cross-school collaboration, the VPR will have a broad familiarity with several disciplines, particularly in STEM, and will be conversant in important new fields and intersections between fields so as to champion innovation and cross-disciplinarity in a bottom-up, faculty-led environment and to advance diversity and inclusion across a large and complex research enterprise.

Qualified candidates will possess a PhD and a scholarly record sufficient for appointment as a full professor with tenure at Northwestern.
Preference will be given to candidates who, in addition to these attributes, competencies, and qualifications, bring a demonstrated track record of involvement in and/or responsibility for the policy, operational, and compliance dimensions of a large sponsored-research program.

Candidates should possess most if not all of the following:

- Demonstrated working knowledge of federal grant and contract administration, practices related to the protection of intellectual property rights, and an understanding of the mission and principles of higher-educational institutions. Previous work experience (at least five years) should have entailed managing sponsored research at a major research university, in the federal government, or at another entity engaged in sponsored research;
- Effective leadership skills, including articulating a strategic vision for the Office for Research, inspiring teams and partners to further a research mission, establishing a collaborative and engaged culture, assessing the environment to adapt to and embrace change, and influencing and empowering a team to deliver results against agreed-upon metrics and with a clear sense of accountability;
- Knowledge of and relationships in the major federal agencies as well private sources of research support, along with institutional convening and advocacy organizations such as AAU;
- Measurable success advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion though hiring, promotion, organizational development, or other activities and initiatives;
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills and the highest level of professional and personal integrity;
- The ability to work effectively with a wide range of internal and external constituencies, including faculty members, research staff committee members, deans, administrators, clinical affiliates, business partners, and federal agencies;
- An international field of vision and activity.

Northwestern University is an Affirmative Action / EEOC employer. Women and members of minority groups are encouraged to apply.

Opus Partners is assisting Northwestern University in this search. Please contact Craig Smith, Partner, or Marisea Rivera, Senior Associate, to apply or to seek additional information: craig.smith@opuspartners.net / marisea.rivera@opuspartners.net.