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Opportunity Overview

The University of Arizona (UA) seeks an outstanding individual for the new position of Senior Vice President Research and Innovation ("SVP") reporting to the President of the University, Robert C. Robbins, MD. The SVP will have principal responsibility to lead, stimulate, and nurture the culture and capacity for knowledge creation and discovery at the University, creating industry and public partnerships, and moving inventions and technologies to the marketplace. The SVP's goals will include increasing total research funding and expanding the University's reputation as the premier innovation center in the Southwest.

To accomplish this ambitious assignment the SVP will work to (i) integrate research and development funding across government, commercial, and not-for-profit funding sources to bolster new discoveries; (ii) manage the University’s Office of Research, the Corporate Engagement Programs, Tech Launch Arizona, and the University’s research parks and Center for Innovation; (iii) bring discoveries to market through collaborative research, licenses to growth companies and creation of new companies; and (iv) enhance the innovation economy in southern Arizona. These goals will be achieved in close collaboration with the Provost and other members of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure strong alignment to the academic program and broader mission of the University.

In the near and mid-term, the SVP’s aspirational goals include:

- Growing the University’s externally-funded research programs and increasing its scholarly, economic, and social relevance;
- Working with University faculty and business leaders to complete signature deals and streamline contractual engagements with commercial and not-for-profit partners which build on the University’s areas of excellence;
- Working with faculty to increase invention disclosures;
- Accelerating license agreements with both new and established companies;
- Increasing the number of start-ups which achieve substantial first round, professional funding; and
- Further developing the regional ecosystem for innovation, new company creation, alignment with major outside organizations, and linkages to other research and educational institutions.

For this challenging opportunity, President Robbins seeks a leader who has a keen understanding of the research/innovation process from inception to commercialization, the ability to marshal the University's resources and create major partnerships with external organizations, the ability to lead through influence and persuasion in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, and the acumen to understand and use the University's intellectual capital to achieve greater connectivity with external collaborators.

(continued)
The SVP will be fluent in science across traditional disciplinary boundaries and will have a successful track record spotting, conceptualizing, and commercializing opportunities for greater impact by molding together programs and research from a variety of disparate groups and completing large scale partnership deals. The SVP must also possess the ability to integrate efforts by faculty, students, staff, and executive leaders to move discoveries into use for the benefit of the University, Arizona, and the nation.

Background

The University

Established in 1885, the University of Arizona, the state’s land-grant university produces graduates who are real-world ready through its 100% Engagement Initiative. UA is advancing the frontiers of interdisciplinary scholarship and entrepreneurial partnerships and is a member of the Association of American Universities, the nation’s 62 leading public and private research universities. UA’s annual budget is $2.2 billion, and it enrolls 45,000 students each year; recognized as a global leader, the UA is also a leader in research, bringing more than $622 million in research investment each year, and ranking 22nd among all public universities. UA benefits the state with an estimated economic impact of $8.3 billion annually.

The University’s Research Enterprise

The University of Arizona is classified as a Carnegie Foundation “RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)” university (formerly “Research 1” university). UA has more than $622 million in research investment each year and ranks 22nd nationally among all public universities. The pillars of Arizona’s new strategic plan research initiatives are (i) Space Technology, Development and Defense for the Fourth Industrial Revolution; (ii) Future Earth; Shaping a Resilient Natural and Built Environment, (iii) Healthier Communities, Aging and the Brain, and Resilient Humans; (iv) Humans, Society, and Intelligent Systems; and College of Data, Computing, and Network Science.

The Research Office provides services to the University for proposal development, compliance and integrity, and core facilities. The Vice President for Research will report to this SVP position.
The University’s Areas of Excellence – Opportunities for Signature Deals

Significant partnerships, commercialization, and social impact will likely come in the areas where UA has demonstrated excellence and plans for future investment and development. The SVP and staff will have/develop keen understandings of research in these domains and work with the Provost, Senior Vice President Research, deans, and faculty to develop joint research and funding streams with commercial and not for profit partners. The “deal team” will focus on partnerships that bridge academic units and multiple faculty and build on current corporate engagement programs which will move under the SVP’s office (https://research.arizona.edu/corporate-engagement).

The university’s goal is to create ten new, significant alliances, many of which will occur in UA’s areas of excellence. Partnering agreements will be achieved with both established organizations and new companies.

Areas of excellence include the following foci:

- **In space technology and exploration**, UA ranks #1 in the country in research and development. Future possibilities for research and development include (i) humans and robots, (ii) expanding understanding of the origins of life in space, (iii) developing monitoring technologies and (iv) business models for space development. Commercial ventures in these areas are accelerating and UA should be a prime partner for joint research and development endeavors.

- A focus on **future earth** research will include planning such as predictive modeling and linking this modeling to built environment models, building resilience to extreme climates, and creating solutions to create a sustainable built environment. Here too joint endeavors with external organizations will accelerate commercial application of discoveries and advancements by UA faculty and researchers.

- UA’s two medical schools and basic science departments across the university are developing approaches and new therapies for personalized medicine through work on **precision health and the brain and the immune system**. Major alliances with other research intense institutions and biopharma firms will be effective for advancing science through multi investigator and multi institutional efforts.

- Fostering permeable boundaries across **science, engineering, and human health** will support UA’s efforts to integrate research in human, society, and intelligent systems. This work will include advancing technology of intelligent systems and human engagement with these systems, defining law, privacy, and security in an increasingly digital world, and applying visual literacy, design thinking, and creative expression to solve critical human problems.
Delivering Discoveries to The Market

Tech Launch Arizona (TLA) is the university principal pathway for commercializing discoveries, inventions, and new knowledge. Commercialization is the process of turning discoveries into inventions, first by patenting intellectual property, then licensing those patents to established companies or to new UA startups. TLA’s 25 staff (including mentors/executives in residence) are responsible for working with faculty to increase invention disclosure and then patent discoveries, license proprietary technology to commercial firms, and work with entrepreneurs and investors to create startup companies. This work includes working with the angel funding groups in southern Arizona, venture firms from across the country, and entrepreneurs to launch start-up companies.

The university’s goals in the next few years are to increase invention disclosures to over 400 and launch 50+ start ups based on UA discoveries. The start ups are likely to cluster in the areas of excellence described above.

Building an Innovation Ecosystem

Ecosystem development combines outreach and advocacy to create a regional business environment where inventors, entrepreneurs and established businesses have the resources they need to thrive, backed by sound policy and a culture of innovation. The SVP will have several tools to expand the current environment. The first two tools are the Corporate Engagement programs and TLA. Additionally, under the direction of the SVP, UA’s research parks – Tech Parks Arizona - will be places for university related research as well as the Corporate Engagement and TLA staff.

Tech Parks Arizona creates the place, environment, and interactive ground that generates, attracts and retains technology companies and talent in alignment with the research, mission and goals of the university. Tech Parks Arizona is the umbrella organization for the UA Tech Park at Rita Road, UA Tech Park at The Bridges, and the Arizona Center for Innovation with the highest priority of recruiting companies with connections to the UA to locate at these facilities.

- UA Tech Park at Rita Road includes 2,000,000 square feet of research, development, and manufacturing space occupied by well established companies such as Raytheon and IBM. The Arizona Center for Innovation – located at Rita Road – provides mentoring, support services, and facilities for faculty wishing to advance research to a pre-commercial stage and early stage companies.

- UA Tech Park at the Bridges, which is initially planned to add an additional 2,000,000 square feet of space, will be developed with a UA partner - it is close to campus and will house incubator/accelerator facilities, maker space for use by faculty and students, both the Corporate Engagement and TLA staff, offices and labs for startup companies, and event space for regional meetings of investors, faculty/researchers, and entrepreneurs. The Bridges will be adjacent to a large scale development of retail, offices, restaurants, and living units; the overarching goal of the full development is creating a live, work, and play innovation district.
Qualifications
The SVP will be goal-driven, demonstrate strong commitment to achieving UA’s broad goals, and will be adept at working with leading researchers, senior executives, boards of major organizations, and investors. He/she must have the capacity to understand the complexities of an AAU research university with an affiliated health system and the ability to anticipate and articulate the critical issues, opportunities, and threats in the foreseeable future.

Significant experience working with or in private industry, strategy development, business development, investing, corporate partnerships, alliance management and university research is required.

The best candidates will also have the following capabilities and personal attributes:

- Exemplary leadership skills with a record of achieving results;
- Participatory management and leadership styles that model the values of service, initiative, and collaboration;
- Thoughtful risk-taking which relies data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended consequences from decisions;
- Strong communication and advocacy skills, equally effective with both internal and external constituents;
- A problem-solving style based on personal integrity, professional confidence, and excellent relationship management skills;
- Nuanced business judgment and personal maturity; and
- Strong ethics and high integrity.
Procedure for Candidacy
Please send a cover letter and resume in confidence to:

SVPResearchInnovation@odgersberndtson.com

Or reach out directly to the consultants leading this engagement:

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At the University of Arizona, we value our inclusive climate because we know that diversity in experiences and perspectives is vital to advancing innovation, critical thinking, solving complex problems, and creating an inclusive academic community. We translate these values into action by seeking individuals who have experience and expertise working with diverse students, colleagues and constituencies. Because we seek a workforce with a wide range of perspectives and experiences, we encourage diverse candidates to apply, including people of color, women, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. As an Employer of National Service, we also welcome alumni of AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and other national service programs and others who will help us advance our Inclusive Excellence initiative aimed at creating a university that values student, staff, and faculty engagement in addressing issues of diversity and inclusiveness.
About Odgers Berndtson

Odgers Berndtson Executive Search is a leading global executive search firm, assisting private and public sector organizations find the highest caliber people for senior management appointments across North America and internationally.

Our reputation at the top of the executive search profession is over 50 years old. With offices in over 50 cities worldwide, our experienced executive search specialists operate with absolute discretion, integrity and care, and are expert in finding exceptional individuals for challenging roles.

WE ARE GLOBAL

We have the support of an excellent international network of offices on the ground expanding across more than 30 countries globally.

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