

JANUARY 2025

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Student Worker
Laboratory of Vaccine Immunology

WAPA
WASSON
WASHBURN
WYOMING

The opportunity

Kansas State University, or K-State, seeks an accomplished and collaborative leader to serve as its next vice president for research, or VPR, cultivating a campus environment that promotes interdisciplinary efforts and produces high-quality research.

K-State is a comprehensive Tier 1 research university serving students and the people of Kansas, the nation and the world. Since its founding in 1863 as the nation's first operational land-grant university, K-State continues to positively impact society and transform lives. Research and creative endeavors comprise an essential component of K-State's mission. All faculty members contribute to the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge, applications and products. These efforts, supported by public and private resources, are conducted in an atmosphere of open inquiry and academic freedom.

K-State provides some of the best global food systems and biosecurity research in the world and is progressing toward its goal of becoming a premier public research university. In FY2024, the university received nearly \$265 million in extramural support for its research, teaching and outreach missions, leading to year-over-year increases in research expenditures. Total extramural funding, as a leading indicator of research expenditures, increased by 23 percent over FY2023.



Reporting directly to [President Richard Linton](#), the VPR is responsible for encouraging and facilitating the integration and enhancement of research activities across the university's colleges and multiple research centers, and will lead university-wide strategic research growth activities. In addition, the VPR will lead the acquisition of research funding; the planning and development of academic research space; patenting, commercialization; the incubation of new companies and recruiting of corporate research partners; and public outreach.

The VPR also guides the university toward the successful achievement of [Imperative 4](#) of the [Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan](#): to grow the research enterprise and annual research expenditures to \$300 million and sponsored programs and awards to \$270 million with a strong focus on conducting world-renowned, problem-based interdisciplinary research that solves grand challenges and makes transformative impacts.

The VPR has administrative responsibility for units that support research infrastructure, including the Office of Research Development, Pre-Award Services, the University Research Compliance Office (including animal care and use, biosafety, the institutional review board and export controls, and the Comparative Medicine Group, among others), and the K-State Postdoctoral Association. In addition, several independent, interdisciplinary research facilities and research support facilities, including the Biosecurity Research Institute, the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center, the Protein and Biopolymer Analysis Core Lab and the Electronics Design Laboratory, will report to the VPR.

The VPR also serves on the President's Cabinet and on state, regional and national committees as requested that promote and support research and facilitates and economic development and engagement activities of the university. The VPR is also the designated responsible institutional official.

The incoming VPR should possess a demonstrated track record of successful leadership with significant administrative and leadership experience growing research endeavors at an institution or organization of comparable size, scope and complexity. This includes skill and experience managing across a complex research infrastructure comprised of multiple sites, centers and facilities, inclusive of independent, interdisciplinary research facilities and research support facilities. They should also possess a deep knowledge and understanding of a mission-focused, distinctive land-grant university and proven ability to oversee the entire research budget for the university. In addition, they should be a skilled, collaborative partner to internal and external stakeholders, including state, regional and national authorities.

For information on how to apply or to submit nominations, please refer to the Search Process section on page 10.



Research focus and K-State's three campuses

Each of K-State's three campuses in Manhattan, Salina and Olathe contribute to the growth of the research enterprise as an integral part of the overall [Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan](#). K-State generates economic prosperity and contributes to grand societal challenges in an interdisciplinary, mutually beneficial way. By uniting resources and expertise to elevate K-State's role in driving world-class discovery, innovation and scholarship, K-State is focused on the following areas, referred to as the [K-State Opportunity Agenda](#):



Community Health
and Well-Being



Enabling
Technologies



Sustainability



Global Food
Security and Biosecurity

K-State serves as the physical epicenter for top 10-ranked programs in research, teaching and engagement related to food systems research and workforce development. The university has invested state, federal and private-sector dollars to build our strengths in global food security (GFS)-related disciplines for many years. The GFS funding greatly enhances the ability of the university to establish Kansas and the region as the premier destination for food and animal health research and innovation. This research enables K-State to discover solutions that ensure global food security.

Manhattan campus research: Established in 1863, K-State's Manhattan campus has grown into a [comprehensive academic and research institution](#).

Renowned for its dedication in various disciplines, K-State is home to more than 90 research centers and institutes that drive advancements in agriculture, technology, health, business and more. K-State offers a dynamic environment for academics, research, student life and community engagement. It embodies the traditions, values and pursuit of excellence that define K-State.

Salina campus research: Established in 1965 as the university's first satellite campus, K-State Salina provides education and training in aviation, engineering, technology and related fields. The campus emphasizes hands-on learning and practical experience, and is renowned for its aviation programs, including professional pilot training and aircraft maintenance.

The campus's Applied Aviation Research Center, or AARC, provides high-quality research to promote the commercialization and integration of uncrewed aircraft systems, or UAS, into the National Airspace System. The state-of-the-art research center is equipped to conduct a variety of projects for federal agencies, state agencies, and commercial customers and end users.

K-State is recognized by the FAA as an expert in the UAS industry and has been part of numerous research projects advising rules and regulations. The campus has been a founding core member of the FAA UAS Center of Excellence for UAS Research, or ASSURE, since 2015.

Learn more about [K-State Salina's research efforts](#).

Olathe campus research: Established in 2011 as K-State's second satellite campus, K-State Olathe focuses on [professional education, research and outreach in food safety, animal health and bioscience](#). The campus is crucial to advancing research and innovation in collaboration with industry partners, governmental agencies and the Kansas City metropolitan community, emphasizing applied learning and practical solutions to address challenges in bioscience and related fields.

K-State Olathe integrates academic programs with industry needs, advancing connections between education and workforce development. The campus serves as a collaborative place for students, researchers and industry professionals to work on cutting-edge projects.

K-State research by the numbers

\$265M in total extramural awards funding in FY2024

1,158 total extramural awards

653 researchers funded

\$5.5M FY 2024 licensing revenue

18 patents awarded

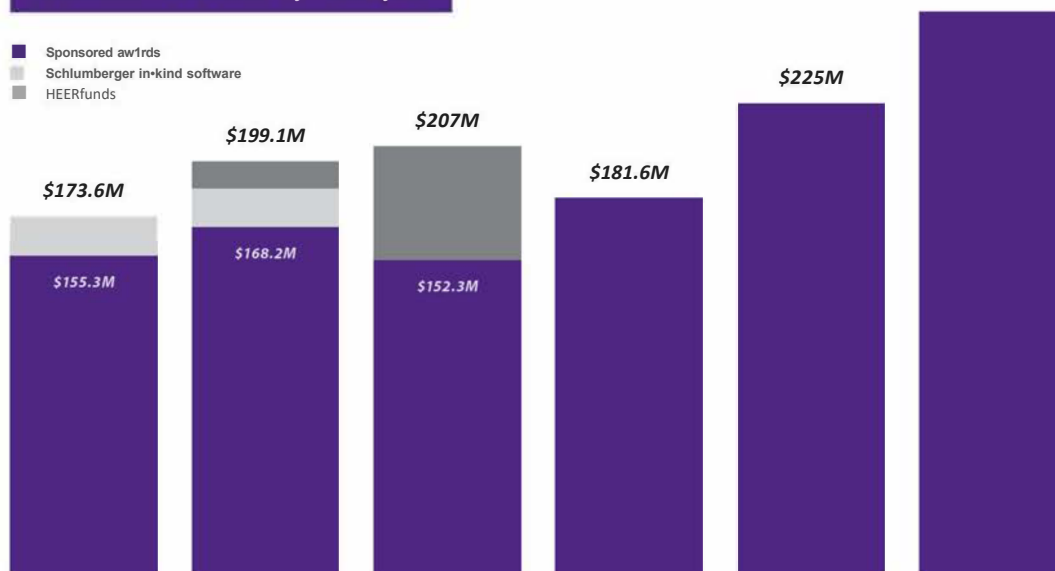
Total extramural funding garnered by Kansas State University has increased for the eighth year in a row. The FY 2024 total of \$265 million is the highest ever for the university

Award count by fiscal year

- **FY2019** 877
- **FY2020** 1,137
- **FY2021** 1,182
- **FY2022** 1,276
- **FY2023** 1,097
- **FY2024** 1,158

Total award amount by fiscal year

- Sponsored awards
- Schlumberger in-kind software
- HEERfunds



Opportunities and responsibilities

K-State seeks a vice president for research who honors its historical legacy and demonstrates the experience, passion, inclusivity, values and inspirational leadership to help the university fulfill its vision of leading the nation as a next-generation land-grant university.

The new VPR will be expected to provide strong leadership and direction for the following priorities:

Advancing a Bold Vision for K-State: The VPR works closely with [President Richard Linton](#) and university leadership to harness the momentum generated by the university's [Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan](#). The VPR provides leadership toward achievement of [Imperative 4](#) of the strategic plan: to grow the research enterprise and annual research expenditures to \$300 million and sponsored programs and awards to \$270 million with a strong focus on conducting world-renowned, problem-based interdisciplinary research that solves grand challenges and makes transformative impacts. The VPR also collaboratively builds a campuswide strategic pathway and its related steps to achieve Imperative 4, ensuring research priorities are well understood and integrated across the entire university. Additionally, they nurture the strategic plan's [Opportunity Agenda](#) areas of well-being, sustainability, enabling technology, future of food and nutrition through bio-manufacturing.

Partnering with Academic Affairs: In alignment with the university's aspirations to grow its research profile as a next-generation land-grant university, the VPR strategically collaborates with [Provost Jesse Perez Mendez](#) as he develops policies and procedures that promote innovation, interdisciplinary research in its areas of strength and create initiatives in support of faculty development. The VPR provides impactful collaboration in highlighting the value of undergraduate and graduate research and applied learning opportunities and in championing and elevating humanities research. In addition, the VPR introduces new and broader ways to integrate the Salina and Olathe campuses into larger research agendas and partners closely with university deans to have a positive impact on the retention of strong research faculty.

Strengthening Research Infrastructure: Leading the Office of Research Development, Pre-Award Services, the University Research Compliance Office and the K-State Postdoctoral Association, the VPR looks for opportunities to strengthen processes and services to spur research growth opportunities. They build upon a review in progress, examining core laboratory facilities, looking for opportunities to increase efficiencies and collaborating across university units. They also address operational weaknesses in pre- and post-award processes and explore ways to support faculty-initiated research expenditures. Infrastructure review may also demand ideation around the research indirect return model as it relates to providing seed money for greater interdisciplinary initiatives.

Increasing External Partnerships in Research: In their oversight for managing the university's intellectual property, the VPR works to increase translational research activities to enhance successful technology transfer. Their leadership of the Office of Research contributes to the resolution of IP issues associated with faculty research and start-up companies. The VPR also serves as a chair of a University/Industry Advisory Committee at the Kansas State University Foundation. As the external face and voice of K-State research, they partner closely with the foundation, assisting with the development of holistic proposals as well as driving stronger and more productive relationships with granting agencies.

The next VPR will engage with the director of extension to support on-going impact growth, while additionally leveraging the power of the land-grant system to reach across the state. The VPR must develop positive and effective relationships with funding agencies and explore untapped opportunities for community engagement and industry partnerships. They will manage the growth and opportunities in biosecurity research without direct National Bio and Agro-defense Facility, or NBAF, partnership and ensure state funding for biomanufacturing, water and digital agriculture initiatives.

Role of the VPR

The VPR serves as the university's chief research officer, providing leadership and expertise in promoting a campus environment that promotes collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts and produces high-quality research.

The VPR is responsible for encouraging and facilitating the integration and enhancement of research activities across the university's colleges and multiple research centers and will lead university-wide strategic research growth activities. In addition, the VPR provides leadership for the acquisition of research funding, the planning and development of academic research space, patenting, commercialization, the incubation of new companies and recruiting of corporate research partners, and public outreach.

The VPR also has administrative responsibility for units that support research infrastructure:

- Office of Research Development.
- Pre-Award Services.
- University Research Compliance Office (including animal care and use, biosafety, the institutional review board and export controls and the Comparative Medicine Group, among others).
- K-State Postdoctoral Association.

In addition, the VPR also has responsibility for several independent, interdisciplinary research facilities and research support facilities:

- Biosecurity Research Institute.
- National Agricultural Biosecurity Center.
- Biotechnology Core Facility.
- Electronics Design Laboratory.

The VPR also serves on state, regional, and national committees as requested that are directed to the promotion and support of research and facilitates and economic development and engagement activities of the university. The VPR is also the designated responsible institutional official.

The VPR seeks innovative approaches to help faculty secure large federal, corporate and foundation grants. In collaboration with individual colleges, the Office of the VPR identifies grant opportunities and assists in preparing major grant applications. It also helps develop policies and procedures for university centers and institutes, selects candidates for faculty fellowships and research awards, and manages state grants for research and economic development.

Additionally, the VPR oversees the university's intellectual property, aiming to enhance technology transfer. The office handles IP issues related to faculty research and start-up companies, especially when technology is licensed through the university. The VPR also plays a key role in developing and managing the university budget, particularly in support of research activities.



Requirements

The successful VPR candidate will be an accomplished and collaborative leader with the expertise in cultivating a university-wide environment that promotes interdisciplinary efforts and produces high-quality research, promoting growth and fostering research endeavors that align with and promote K-State's commitments as a land-grant institution in service to the state, region, nation and globe.

The candidate should be a person of high integrity and character with strong interpersonal, collaboration, diplomacy and communication skills. They also will be committed to student access and success, research excellence and entrepreneurial research activity that has a lasting impact on the state, nation and world will be important. They should be an accessible leader, value transparency in the decision-making process and have a steadfast commitment to promoting a community of connection that values all backgrounds and intersectionalities that contribute to the inherent dignity and growth of all.

Required Education and Qualifications:

- A terminal degree in a discipline represented within the university is required, as are credentials that merit faculty appointment at the tenured professor or principal research faculty level.
- Candidates must hold or be able to secure a security clearance.

Preferred Education and Qualifications:

Leadership and Management

- Ability to represent the research vision, strategies, goals and needs of the enterprise nationally and internationally, and to the executive leadership of the university.
- Experience building cohesive, high-performing teams that complement their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Understanding of the needs of research faculty — from early career to senior level — and ability to not only effectively support but also inspire growth of their research, goals and objectives.
- Demonstrated ability to cultivate strong partnerships and collaborations with deans, administrators and faculty, as well as government, industry, community constituents and other research enterprises.
- Significant leadership experience in research, contracts and grant administration, and evidence of innovative leadership in creating strategic research plans, developing faculty researchers and achieving research goals.
- Demonstrated evidence of a commitment to and leadership in a university community that values broad access to its research enterprise with a stated dedication to inclusive excellence.
- A strong commitment to fully realizing K-State's research potential in strengthening research connections with local, national and international communities and scholars.

Research, Policy and Economic Development

- An understanding of contemporary public higher education and the development of research infrastructure and enterprises.
- An understanding and appreciation for the relationship between research and entrepreneurship and the ability to unify diverse stakeholder groups in fostering an environment that promotes effective strategies and partnerships geared toward innovation. The ability and strong desire to lead a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- Significant job-related experience in research within higher education, government, and/or industry with demonstrated success in transition and adoption of research results as required.
- Significant leadership experience in research and grant administration, significant experience in the development of cross-disciplinary research ventures and demonstrated experience with interpreting and managing complex agreements and authoring successful extramural research initiatives.
- Documented record as a principal investigator of large, competitive federal or similar research grants.
- Knowledge and understanding of federal, state and regional regulations and research compliance policies, procedures and requirements.

- Experience in policy setting and decision making in the research enterprise context and the desire to participate in leading and influencing the national and global research agenda by participating in AAU leadership discussions and advising Congress, among other activities.
- Ability to foster research while maintaining the highest integrity and commitment to compliant research activities.
- Informed perspective about federal agencies, federally sponsored programs, intellectual property, technology transfer and commercialization in the university environment.

Strategic Development and Execution

- The ability to design, articulate and implement an inspiring, forward-looking, and transformative vision that leverages the Institute's strengths and builds upon its strategic plan.
- Demonstrated experience overseeing and launching successful large-scale strategic projects, including managing change, setting and implementing strategy and facilitating stakeholder engagement.
- A commitment to data-informed decision-making and ability to align others with overall strategy and goals.

Fiscal Acumen and Fundraising

- Ability to interpret budgets and implement effective institutional budgeting and fiscal management strategies.
- Proclivity and skills for relationship building with federal and national funding agencies.
- The passion for developing and executing development proposals for philanthropic, industry and alumni partners.

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Excellent communication skills with a demonstrated ability to listen to a variety of constituent groups, synthesize input, make decisions and share information broadly to build consensus and support for action.
- Strong interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills and ability to lead, either directly or through the application of persuasive influence.
- Ability to relate effectively to a wide variety of people of diverse backgrounds, including an understanding and respect for community members of all identities.
- Excellent management, organization, planning, supervisory and problem-solving skills.



Search process

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited and will be treated confidentially.

Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting K-State in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by March 10, 2025.

Application materials should be submitted directly to WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to Zachary A. Smith, Ph.D., Sandra Chu and Natalie Song at K-StateVPR@WittKieffer.com.

Upon acceptance of a contingent offer of employment, a candidate may be subject to a background check per K-State's background check policy.

Applicants must be currently authorized to work in the United States at the time of employment.

Kansas State University is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, national origin, disability or status as a protected veteran.

About the institution

Founded in 1863 as the nation's first operational land-grant university, Kansas State is a Tier 1 research university with more than 20,200 students, 1,300 faculty members, 3,000 staff members and three physical campuses: the main campus in Manhattan; the Kansas State Salina campus, home to aviation and technology programs; and K-State Olathe, which serves the industry and workforce needs of Greater Kansas City.

K-State has nine colleges, Graduate School and K-State Online and offers more than 400 degrees and options, from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. K-State Research and Extension also serves the citizenry with a presence in every county throughout Kansas and supports research in more than 20 K-State departments. K-State has an annual budget of more than \$900 million. K-State is known for the passion and pride of its alumni. With more than 200,000 living graduates, the K-State Alumni Association has been No.1 in the Big 12 for more than 25 years, based on the percentage of graduates who are members, and No. 4 among Power Five conferences. Private giving to the university is around \$200 million per year, and the KSU Foundation has an investment pool and endowment of more than \$950 million. The university and foundation recently completed a major fundraising campaign that raised \$1.6 billion. The Princeton Review recognizes the university as one of the nation's best colleges. Kansas State also has been designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and is recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution. Commonly referred to as K-State, the university is proud of its welcoming environment.





University mission, vision and values

K-State's mission is to foster excellent teaching, research and service that develop the highly skilled and educated citizenry necessary to advancing the well-being of Kansas, the nation and the international community.

K-State's vision is to lead the nation as a next-generation land-grant university – setting the standard for inspiring learning, creativity, discovery and engagement that positively impacts society and transforms lives in Kansas and around the world. The university Values and Principles of Community guide how the community lives out its mission. For more information about Kansas State, visit our [University Profile](#).



Diversity and inclusion

K-State has a long, storied history of embracing diversity and inclusion as a core component of their educational mission.

As the nation's first operational land-grant, K-State has always admitted students without regard to race, gender, or creed. Its commitment to meeting the needs and interests of a diverse student body and preparing all constituents for meaningful engagement in an ever changing, diverse world is unwavering. The university believes that diversity adds value to the educational fabric of the institution, and students are encouraged to capitalize on the learning opportunities that differences can create. To learn more information about diversity and inclusion at K-State, please visit <https://www.k-state.edu/diversity-inclusion>.



The Community

Situated in the heart of northeast Kansas' scenic Flint Hills, Manhattan's 56,000 citizens enjoy a dynamic community with shopping, dining, entertainment, and nightlife. Manhattan is affectionately known as the "Little Apple," a nod to its East Coast namesake, but has a vibrant culture all its own.

Here is just a sampling of what residents look forward to year-round:

- Shopping, dining, and socializing in Aggieville, a local entertainment district with a fun, energetic vibe.
- A vibrant, revitalized downtown area with fine dining options and local boutiques.
- The Flint Hills Discovery Center, featuring exhibits about the beautiful surrounding region.
- Beautiful outdoor life at Sunset Zoo and The Gardens at K-State.
- Recreation opportunities at the Konza Prairie, Tuttle Creek State Park, Linear Park Trail and more.
- The university's McCain Performance Series, which hosts acclaimed Broadway musicals, comedians, musicians and other entertainers.
- Exciting Big 12 athletic events. (Faculty and staff are eligible for discounted tickets.)
- Colbert Hills Golf Course, ranked as the top public golf course in Kansas.
- Excellent K-12 education. The local high school ranks among the top 5 percent of U.S. high schools, and the district is home to several Kansas Master Teachers.

Learn more about the Manhattan community at manhattan.org or madeformanhattan.org.





KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY