



Vice President for Research and Economic Development Leadership Profile

February 2026



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

East Texas A&M University (ETAMU) seeks a forward-thinking and collaborative Vice President for Research and Economic Development (VPRED) to guide the institution through a period of significant momentum and growth.

As a recently designated R2 research university, ETAMU has doubled its research funding over five years and continues to expand doctoral offerings. The next VPRED will play a central role in sustaining this trajectory by collaborating across the University to create a clear strategy for long-term research expansion and enabling the success of faculty, staff, and students. This individual should be adept at linking institutional strengths with regional needs and national trends, ensuring ETAMU remains both relevant and impactful in a rapidly changing research landscape. Collaboration sits at the heart of ETAMU's research mission and the next VPRED must be a dynamic relationship-builder capable of forging strong cross-campus, System-wide, and external partnerships.

East Texas A&M University is a rapidly growing, student-ready institution with a rising national profile. Founded in 1889, the University brings forward a 137-year legacy of excellence and is the third-largest institution in The Texas A&M University System. Serving approximately 13,000 students, ETAMU offers more than 140 quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs across multiple locations and online. The University's [2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) serves as the foundation for building a strong and vibrant university that continues to excel in serving rural and urban Texas. Strategic goals include: 1) Ensuring student preparedness; 2) Elevating research; 3) Creating a welcoming community; 4) Aligning initiatives with the University's rural-urban identity; and 5) Modernizing University operations and business practices.

For information regarding how to apply, submit nominations, or inquire about the role, please see the section "Procedure for Candidacy" at the end of this document.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Vice President for Research and Economic Development (VPRED) will be expected to address the following priorities, among others:

Set a path for sustainable research growth. East Texas A&M was [designated as an R2 institution](#) in 2025, marking a key moment in the University's continued evolution. ETAMU doubled its research funding from FY19 to FY24 and has averaged approximately \$7 million in research expenditures over the last three fiscal years. The next VPRED will be expected to work with the constituents across the University and Texas A&M System to implement strategies to solidify its R2 status and set a long-term vision for achieving designation as an R1 institution. This individual should demonstrate an understanding of the support structures, infrastructure, equipment, and personnel required for faculty and staff success in the pursuit of external funding and the ability to help diversify the University's funding sources. The VPRED will also work closely with Academic Affairs leadership and faculty as the University develops new Ph.D. programs that will increase the number of doctoral degrees awarded (the University averaged 63 doctoral graduates from FY19 to FY25) and continue to fuel growth in research expenditures.

Identify areas of research focus that align with current institutional strengths and future opportunities.

ETAMU has a number of areas of strength that have helped to support its research growth in recent years, including the [Lyon Center for Gamebird Research](#) and the [First Responder Resilience](#) program within the [ROARHP Lab](#) (which focuses on optimizing human performance). As the University looks towards the future, it is exploring opportunities around applied computing, sustainable agriculture, and sport science, among other areas. ETAMU also has a strong reputation as a student-centered institution, providing experiential learning opportunities such as [undergraduate research](#). The VPRED will need to work closely with University leadership and faculty to identify potential areas of growth, playing a critical role in identifying the nexus of institutional strength, regional needs, and national and international trends. This individual must be skilled at engaging others to understand the unique opportunities and needs related to their disciplines while also having a broader view of current and future trends impacting research.

Facilitate connections and collaborations. The next VPRED must be a skilled relationship builder with the ability to facilitate connections and partnerships across a range of disciplines, units, and organizations through an inclusive and transparent leadership approach. The Vice President will work closely with deans and department chairs across campus as well as collaborate with other parts of the Texas A&M System, including the [System's Vice Chancellor for Research](#), [other A&M System institutions](#), and [state agencies](#). The Board of Regents recently created a [new committee on research](#) to support the expansion of research activity and research collaboration across the System. The VPRED will also be expected to identify relationships with businesses, industry, government, and community organizations that leverage the research capacity and expertise of the University to advance regional needs through workforce development, applied research, and technology transfer. This individual must have a record of effectively advancing transdisciplinary research and establishing effective partnerships.

Build, support, and empower a high-performing team. The [Division of Research and Economic Development](#) currently consists of a lean but effective team supporting the research efforts across the University. The VPRED should demonstrate an ability to enable the professional success and development of staff and promote effective and efficient operations. As research activity continues to grow, the Vice President will need to ensure compliance through continued implementation of best practices while amplifying the central support available to research-active faculty and staff.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The Vice President for Research and Economic Development must have a demonstrated record of successful leadership in research administration and an earned doctorate. Additionally, the successful candidate should demonstrate the following qualities and qualifications:

- A collaborative, inclusive leadership approach and the ability to work with individuals across the University to shape a strategy that will increase research activity and impact, leveraging institutional strengths and identifying future opportunities.
- An understanding of current and future trends impacting research and the ability to position an institution for future success in a dynamic environment.
- A willingness to innovate, experiment, and adapt strategies as needed.
- A record of successfully implementing structures and identifying resources – financial, infrastructure, and personnel – that will help support faculty and staff research efforts and ensure institutional compliance.
- Experience working with a range of agencies and organizations to build a diverse funding portfolio.
- A leadership approach that supports the professional success and development of staff and ensures effective and efficient operations.
- Strong financial management skills and the ability to effectively utilize resources to achieve institutional goals.
- A record of building strong relationships across a range of individuals, units, and organizations that lead to effective and mutually beneficial partnerships, including success in facilitating transdisciplinary research.
- Experience effectively engaging students in research.
- The ability to build partnerships and implement initiatives that will advance economic development in the region, including workforce development, applied research, and technology transfer.
- Strong communication skills and a commitment to proactive and transparent communication.



About East Texas A&M University

Overview

East Texas A&M University is a rapidly growing, student-ready institution with a rising national profile. Founded in 1889, the University brings forward a 137-year legacy of excellence and is the third-largest institution in The Texas A&M University System. Serving approximately 13,000 students, East Texas A&M offers more than 140 quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs across multiple locations and online.

In November 2024, the institution adopted the name East Texas A&M University, transitioning from Texas A&M University-Commerce. The new name honors the University's East Texas heritage while reinforcing its deep connection to the communities it serves. With a distinctive rural-urban identity, East Texas A&M is increasingly recognized as the institution of choice for students across Northeast Texas, including those from low-income and first-generation backgrounds. The University is nationally recognized for its leadership in social mobility and its commitment to preparing students for lifelong success.

Located approximately one hour from Dallas, East Texas A&M operates a 2,094-acre main campus in Commerce alongside a growing urban presence at its Dallas location on North Central Expressway. Additional education sites in Bryan, Corsicana, Mesquite, and online expand access and flexibility for students across the region.

In 2025, East Texas A&M earned an R2 research classification, affirming its status as a major research institution. Students engage in hands-on learning supported by modern facilities, including a high-tech hospital simulation lab, a 1,300-acre sustainability-focused research farm, and new agricultural and wildlife research centers opening soon. Faculty are deeply committed to excellence in teaching and research, supported by strong partnerships with regional industries that provide relevant academic programming, internships, and career pathways.

As an Adobe-designated campus, East Texas A&M emphasizes digital literacy and career readiness from the point of enrollment. Student success is supported through a comprehensive network of academic advisors, college life coaches, career navigators, and financial coaches. The University also invests in its faculty and staff through ongoing professional development opportunities, including the presidential initiative, *[Investing in Us](#)*.

Campus life is vibrant and engaged, with a thriving Greek system, more than 100 student organizations, and NCAA Division I Lion Athletics competing in 14 sports. A 65,000-square-foot event center, currently under construction, will be the home to the University's basketball teams. Committed to transforming lives, East Texas A&M University offers a compelling environment for leadership, growth, and impact.

Strategic Plan

The University's [2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) serves as the foundation for building a strong and vibrant university that continues to excel in serving rural and urban Texas. Strategic goals include: 1) Ensuring student preparedness; 2) Elevating research; 3) Creating a welcoming community; 4) Aligning initiatives with the University's rural-urban identity; and 5) Modernizing University operations and business practices.

Leadership

Dr. Mark J. Rudin, President



Dr. Mark J. Rudin was named the thirteenth president of East Texas A&M University on August 16, 2018. A progressive leader with a passion for innovation and research, Dr. Rudin is using his experience and expertise to grow East Texas A&M into a leading teaching and research institution.

Rudin earned his doctorate in medicinal chemistry from Purdue University. He spent his early career as a project engineer with Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, working to develop new technologies and processes to clean up radioactive waste from the World War II-era Manhattan Project.

Rudin also taught courses in environmental health physics and radiation instrumentation at Idaho State University. Later, he moved to Washington, D.C., to complete a one-year assignment with the U.S. Department of Energy, advising the Office of Environmental Management on technologies to treat mixed nuclear waste streams.

In 1993, Rudin traded government work for academia when he accepted the role of program director for the new Department of Health Physics at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas (UNLV). As a faculty member, he developed a new master's program in health physics, taught a variety of physics and biology courses, conducted and published research, and served as the health physics department chair. In 2003, he was asked to serve as associate vice president for research and then vice president for research.

After 13 years with UNLV, Rudin left the Nevada desert to join Boise State University (BSU) in 2007 as vice president for research. Under his leadership, research funding increased by more than \$26 million and BSU was named a doctoral research institution by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.



Commerce, TX

The city of Commerce is located in Northeast Texas, about 60 miles northeast of Dallas. With a population of more than 9,200, Commerce is a close-knit community of involved citizens. The city's historic downtown features family-owned boutiques, a coffee shop, and eateries. Commerce has a high school, middle school, and elementary school close to ETAMU's campus. The area is a peaceful and rural region.



Procedure for Candidacy

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be submitted through the [**WittKieffer Candidate Portal**](#). Applicants should submit, as separate documents, a CV or résumé and a letter of interest that addresses the themes outlined in this profile. WittKieffer is assisting East Texas A&M University in this search. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by **March 18, 2026**.

Nominations and inquiries can also be directed to Ryan Crawford, Natalie Song, and Bronwen Bares Pelaez, Ph.D., at ETAMU-VPRED@wittkieffer.com.

East Texas A&M University is an Equal Opportunity/Veterans/Disability Employer.