



Associate Director, AgBioResearch

Leadership Profile

June 2024



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Michigan State University (MSU) seeks a mission- and vision-driven leader to serve as the Associate Director of AgBioResearch (ABR). The applicant's background will determine a suitable tenure home. Applications, inquiries, and nominations are invited.

MSU is the nation's premier land-grant university and one of the top research universities in the world. As a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Big Ten Academic Alliance, MSU is nationally recognized for its academic excellence, impactful research, and global outreach. It is also known for its Spartan grit and resilience. MSU is stronger because of its community, which includes more than 51,000 students, 5,600 faculty and staff, and a network of over half a million living alums who are extremely loyal supporters and cheerleaders for the university.

AgBioResearch, founded in 1888 as the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, is part of a nationwide network of agricultural experiment stations created after the passage of the Hatch Act to benefit farmers and deliver agrarian advancements. Today, our focus has broadened to include a robust research portfolio covering food, health, and the environment. Over 300 faculty across seven colleges, with a majority investment in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR), conduct research as part of the ABR portfolio. The diversity of ABR's portfolio is driven by Michigan being the most diverse agricultural state with bountiful water and a strong connection with stakeholders. These partnerships and diversity allow us the opportunity to have a balanced research portfolio of fundamental research focused on grand challenges of the future while conducting applied research to address the short-term needs of the State of Michigan through programs like Project GREEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs), Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture (M-AA), and agriculture climate resiliency program.

The Associate Director is a key team member, contributing to the leadership, development, and implementation of ABR's university-wide mission and vision. This mission and vision are focused on enhancing the research portfolio of agriculture, food systems, and the environment. The Associate Director will have the unique opportunity to shape the vision and leadership of programs and priorities that significantly impact the research activity of ABR-affiliated faculty. In addition, will be at the forefront of ensuring ABR can effectively address and support the needs of stakeholders within the agriculture and natural resources communities, CANR and other partner colleges, and numerous partners within the University. The Associate Director will also be responsible for providing oversight on research grant administration, managing the research space portfolio, and communicating the value and accomplishments of research at MSU.

Reporting to the Director of ABR, the associate director will collaborate with ABR-affiliated faculty, MSU Extension (MSUE) colleagues, external stakeholders, local government officials, donors, and funding agencies, thereby facing unique challenges and opportunities in this role.

Qualified candidates must: (a) have earned a doctorate in agriculture, natural resources, biological or natural science, engineering, social sciences, or a closely related discipline and meet the requirements for tenure at the rank of full professor at MSU; (b) demonstrate outstanding leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills necessary to lead a diverse community; and, (c) demonstrate a commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in a range of academic and professional activities.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.



Key Responsibilities:

- Promote the full spectrum of fundamental and applied research across MSU disciplines, including promoting future research directions and collaborations.
- Contribute to the strategic vision of ABR.
- Serve on the ABR Leadership Team and participate in weekly meetings, during which programming and budgets are discussed and decisions are made.
- Engage with MSU Extension to promote collaborative efforts and advance research impacts.
- Work collaboratively with the ABR Communications Team to promote accomplishments and impacts of research.
- Work collaboratively with the ABR Research Evaluation and Data Analytics Unit to promote and evaluate the research portfolio.
- Connect with external partners within the Michigan agricultural and natural resources community for updates and input and to promote partnerships.
- Communicate ABR's vision, values, and recent accomplishments in interactions with state and local government officials, external stakeholders, donors, and funding agencies.
- Provide input on research grant administration, including pre-award, post-award, research evaluation, and data analytics.
- Contribute to space-related oversight linked to the ABR research portfolio (e.g., offices, labs, greenhouses, natural areas, and field research sites.)
- Serve as an ABR liaison for position searches (e.g., faculty, staff, or administrative positions).
- Contribute to mentoring ABR Administrative Fellows.
- Address other responsibilities as assigned.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The associate director will be asked to address the following opportunities, among others:

Support the mission and vision of AgBioResearch

The associate director, working closely with the ABR team, will help advance the mission and vision of AgBioResearch at MSU. This will include promoting the full spectrum of fundamental and applied research. ABR's operational budget is roughly \$47M annually from federal and state dollars and university general funds. The associate director will work to support the continued growth of research and sponsored projects, ensuring faculty are aware of funding opportunities and identifying potential synergies for future collaborations. The associate director will also partner closely with the communications team to share the impact of the research taking place at ABR. The associate director should have experience and skills to work with faculty to help remove barriers to support the growth of research. The incumbent is expected to be a process-oriented leader who thrives in an interdisciplinary environment.

Ensure strong collaboration and communication across the institution and with external constituents.

The associate director must be a quintessential partner and collaborator who thrives in a highly collaborative and collegial environment to develop strong partnerships with the 300 faculty across seven schools and colleges that are a part of ABR. The associate director must have a visible and active campus presence, enabling them to get to know the depth and breadth of MSU's research programs. Hence, they are well-positioned to identify opportunities to work across programs, build new collaborations, and realize synergies. The associate director will also work closely with key partners, including MSU Extension (MSUE) colleagues, external stakeholders, local government officials, the Office of Research and Innovation, donors, and state and federal funding agencies.

Foster a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

MSU and ABR are committed to fostering an environment that ensures diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all faculty, staff, and students. The associate director must ensure a healthy and productive work environment and organizational culture of openness, fairness, and transparency that celebrates a diversity of thought and expression and promotes an inclusive environment. The associate director will provide visible, accessible, and engaged leadership and prioritize communicating actively, formally, and informally.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Qualifications:

Qualified candidates must: (a) have earned a doctorate in agriculture, natural resources, biological or natural science, engineering, social sciences, or a closely related discipline and meet the requirements for tenure at the rank of full professor at MSU; (b) demonstrate outstanding leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills necessary to lead a diverse community; and, (c) demonstrate a commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in a range of academic and professional activities.

- Desired qualifications include:
- A proven record of excellence in leadership, management, and administration skills; including developing and fostering working relationships with faculty, staff, and stakeholders, team building, and managing staff issues/concerns.
- Experience in leadership and administering large, multidisciplinary, and diverse research teams and programmatic endeavors.
- Experience overseeing budgets, an ability to garner additional funds and resources for programs, and the ability to partner with advancement and development.
- Experience building capacities that support the ever-changing agriculture and natural resources communities, consistent with the land-grant mission.



About Michigan State University

Overview

[Michigan State University](#) is the nation's pioneer land-grant university and one of the top research universities in the world. Home to nationally ranked academic, residential college, and service-learning programs, MSU enjoys a park-like campus with outlying research facilities and natural areas. MSU is a diverse community that provides regional, national, and international leadership in research, excellence in teaching (emphasizing international engagement), and a strong Extension program that partners with diverse interest groups to bring science-based responses to social and environmental challenges. The University proactively upholds the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provides individual accessibility plans to students and employees with disabilities. MSU is also proactive in exploring employment opportunities for dual-career families inside and outside the University and respects all family forms. Information regarding MSU's dual career and other Work-life support can be found at <https://worklife.msu.edu/>.

Michigan possesses abundant natural resources and is surrounded by the beautiful Great Lakes. The MSU campus is in the [City of East Lansing](#), adjacent to the capital city of Lansing. The area has a diverse population of approximately 450,000. Local communities have excellent school systems and place a high value on education. The region has numerous music and theatre offerings, with an active arts community that includes the [Wharton Center for the Performing Arts](#) and the [Broad Art Museum](#). Michigan boasts a growing local food movement, over 200 wineries and 200 microbreweries, diverse outdoor recreation activities, and a range of sporting events year-round.

AgBioResearch

Founded on February 26, 1888, as the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State University AgBioResearch is part of a nationwide network of agricultural experiment stations created after the passage of the Hatch Act to benefit farmers and deliver agrarian advancements. Today, our focus has broadened to include a robust research portfolio covering food, health, and the environment. Over 300 faculty across seven colleges conduct research as part of the ABR portfolio.

ABR conducts leading-edge research that combines scientific expertise with practical applications to advance agriculture, sustain natural resources, generate economic prosperity, and enhance the quality of life in Michigan and worldwide. Researchers across the MSU campus seek to discover economically feasible, scientifically based solutions to global challenges such as climate change, water issues, invasive species, and food safety and security.

Our success is based on partnerships with the Michigan agriculture and natural resources sectors, MSU Extension, commodity organizations, governmental funding agencies, and exceptional legislative support at the state and federal levels. Industry and stakeholder input heavily guides our research in meeting specific needs and addressing emerging threats.

Leadership

George Smith, PhD



As AgBioResearch director, Smith is responsible for strategic direction and administrative oversight for the organization, whose university-wide research mission is linked directly to promoting dynamic solutions for food systems and the environment in Michigan and beyond. AgBioResearch directly supports approximately 300 scientists from seven MSU colleges engaged in research, 15 outlying centers throughout Michigan reflective of the diversity of its research portfolio in agriculture and natural resources, and numerous on-campus facilities and key research infrastructure.

Smith obtained his doctoral and master's degrees in animal science with a concentration in reproductive physiology from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and his Bachelor of Science in animal science from the University of Idaho. He joined the faculty at MSU in 1997. His research efforts at MSU focused primarily on dairy cattle reproduction. During his career, Smith published 143 journal articles and 17 book chapters, and his research was continuously funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the National Institutes of Health from 1998 until he transitioned to full-time research administration efforts in 2020.



East Lansing

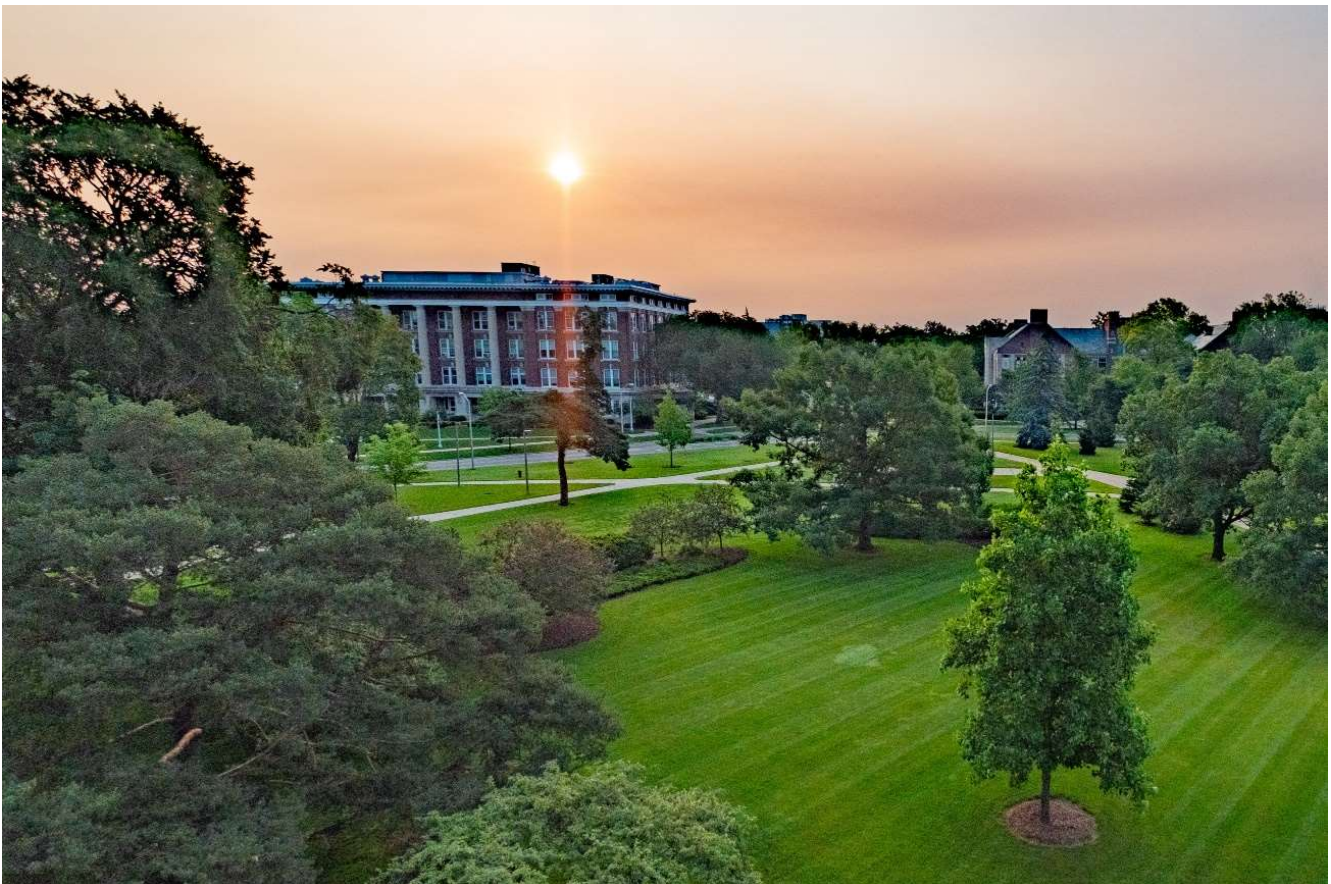
Michigan State University is located in [East Lansing](#), a vibrant college town just three miles from Michigan's capital, Lansing, the hard-working heart of Michigan.

The area offers countless things to do, see, and experience — from art galleries, concerts, restaurants, gardens, parks, and trails. And you don't have to venture far to discover Michigan's sandy beaches, ski slopes, and metropolitan life.

As the seasons change, so does Michigan State University. From vibrant fall color to blankets of fresh snow to spring blossoms on MSU's sprawling park-like campus, you'll never tire of the scenery.

Discover more about Michigan [here](#).

Learn more about East Lansing [here](#).



Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile, including a statement detailing how your past and future work will contribute to advancing MSU's commitment to inclusive excellence.

WittKieffer is assisting Michigan State University in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by **August 9, 2024**.

Confidential Nominations, inquiries, and application materials can be directed to:

[Jessica Herrington](#) and [Natalie Song](#) at:

MSUAgBioAD@wittkieffer.com

In addition, candidates **must** apply through Michigan State University's online portal at [MSU - Careers](#).

All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, age, disability or protected veteran status.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Michigan State University and ABR are committed to achieving excellence by creating and sustaining an inclusive culture that values diversity. We are an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. ABR is particularly interested in candidates of all backgrounds who are committed to the principle that academic excellence and accessibility are achieved by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Salary and Benefits

The salary will be commensurate with qualifications, and the tenure home will align with the applicant's background. MSU offers a generous benefits package (details are at <https://hr.msu.edu/benefits/index.html>).

