

Executive Director, Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food
Institute
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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Posted Jun. 11, 2025, set to expire Oct. 13, 2025

Job Title	Executive Director, Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute
Department	IANR - Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/
Institution	University of Nebraska - Lincoln Lincoln, Nebraska
Date Posted	Jun. 11, 2025
Application Deadline	Jul. 21, 2025
Position Start Date	TBD
Job Categories	Director/Manager
Academic Field(s)	Water Management/Policy Land & Water Resource Engineering Environmental Science & Ecology Agricultural - General
Job Website	https://employment.unl.edu/postings/97029
Apply Online Here	https://employment.unl.edu/postings/97029
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Job Description	

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The University of Nebraska seeks a dynamic and visionary leader for the position of Executive Director of the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute (DWFI). As an Institute of the University of Nebraska, DWFI is engaged in research, academic programs, and outreach programming that involve all the University's campuses.

DWFI is a research, education, and policy institute of the University of Nebraska committed to helping the world efficiently use its limited freshwater resources to ensure the food supply for current and future generations. Founded in 2010 to address the global challenge of achieving food security with less pressure on water resources through improved management of water in agricultural and food systems, DWFI was launched with the announcement of a \$50 million gift from the Robert B. Daugherty Charitable Foundation, one of the largest gifts in the University of Nebraska's history. The founder of Valmont Industries in Omaha, Mr. Daugherty had a deep commitment to the efficient and sustainable use of water to feed a growing world population.

The Executive Director has the unique and exciting opportunity to lead a premier research, education, and policy analysis institute that has global impact. The Executive Director provides leadership, strategic direction, and oversight for the Institute's three primary missions of research, education, and policy (including Extension/outreach) with the goal of achieving lasting and significant impact on achieving food security with less pressure on water resources. The Executive Director's primary charge is to continue to build DWFI as a global leader in the international water and food communities by developing and nurturing local, national, and international partnerships with the public and private sectors, pursuing collaborative opportunities, demonstrating achievement of results, and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the Institute.

The Executive Director oversees a core leadership team that includes a Director of Research, Director of Policy, Director of the Nebraska Water Center, Director of Water Climate and Health program, Director of Public Relations and Communications, an Associate Director, and an Assistant Director in addition to the Institute's Faculty Fellows, post-doctoral fellows, graduate, and undergraduate students. The Executive Director reports to the NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor.

The University seeks a leader with vision, scientific expertise, and administrative experience to promote DWFI as a global leader in water for agriculture. The Executive Director will be a passionate advocate for the Institute who brings ideas, positive energy, and the motivation to work with others to find solutions to a looming crisis. The Executive Director will embrace the importance of the Institute's mission and its focus on high quality research with practical applications that are accessible to the world community. The Executive Director must have outstanding credentials that bridge water and agriculture research, broad international experience and connectivity, strong fund-raising skills, and an

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impressive record of collaboration inside and outside the academy.

This is a 100% administrative appointment that will be located in Lincoln, Nebraska. The executive director will be appointed to a five-year renewable term, subject to satisfactory annual reviews and a formal reappointment process.

Minimum Required Qualifications

- Accomplishments commensurate with a faculty appointment in an academic unit within IANR.
- Broad intellectual interests that span the domains of science, engineering, and policy; and an integrative approach that recognizes the interconnection of these domains in the water for food arena and the embedded role of agriculture in the larger context of sustainability of ecosystems.
- Success in establishing a vision and motivating others to work toward achievement of that vision.
- Evidence of being a persuasive communicator, both verbally and in writing, who can work effectively with people from diverse groups and disciplines, including faculty, staff, and students, leaders from industry, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations with international representation.
- Success in obtaining grants and contracts from governmental agencies, private foundations, donors, and other sources.
- Ability to build partnerships and foster collaboration among diverse groups.
- Excellent leadership and management skills.
- Demonstrated ability to manage complex budgets and to strategically deploy resources in a way that maximizes impact.
- A strong level of comfort working within both the global and local (Nebraska/High Plains) contexts.

Preferred Qualifications

- Ph.D. in an academic field within IANR.
- Evidence of navigating complex situations and making strategic decisions.
- Demonstrated encouragement and/or development of innovative and entrepreneurial activities, including an acumen in identifying targets of opportunity, creating and implementing new initiatives, and fostering an entrepreneurial and innovation mind-set in others.
- Demonstrated ability to actively understand and respect the perspectives and values of students, staff, faculty, and stakeholders.

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Application Process

The search advisory committee will continue to receive applications until the Executive Director is selected. To ensure full consideration, nominations and applications should be submitted before the application review date, July 21, 2025.

Questions and nominations can be directed in confidence to the co-chairs of the search committee:

Derek McLean, Ph.D.
Dean and Director
Agricultural Research Division
University of Nebraska
derek.mclean@unl.edu

Felicia Marcus
William C. Landreth Visiting Fellow
Stanford University
Water in the West Program
feliciaamarcus@gmail.com

Interested applicants should go to <https://employment.unl.edu>, requisition number F_250046. Click "Apply for this Job," complete the faculty information form, and attach the following documents:

1. A letter of interest that describes your qualifications for the position, anticipated contributions, and vision for DWFI.
2. A statement describing your experience working in teams or groups and your anticipated contributions to environments in which every person and every interaction matters (2 page maximum). See [Tips for Writing About Contributions to Teams and Work and Learning Environments | Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources | Nebraska](#) for guidance in writing this statement.
3. A detailed curriculum vitae.
4. The names and contact information for five (5) professional references.

References will be requested only from candidates who make the short list. All candidate information

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will be held in confidence until the final stage of the search, at which time the express permission of finalists will be obtained before making their candidacy public. Candidates are urged to review all information and documents posted on the search website.

For questions and assistance with submitting the application contact Rachel Szelag, Senior HR Specialist at rszelag2@unl.edu or by phone at (402) 472-5730.

The University of Nebraska offers an attractive compensation and benefits package, commensurate with the successful candidate's background and experience.

EEO/AA Policy

As an EO/AA employer, qualified applicants are considered for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation. See <http://www.unl.edu/equity/notice-nondiscrimination>

Contact Information

Please reference Academickeys in your cover letter when applying for or inquiring about this job announcement.

Contact Alesia Zaruba
IANR
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
300 Agriculture Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583-0708

Contact E-mail rszelag2@unl.edu