



## Dean of the Jackson School of Geosciences

### Leadership Profile

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*WittKieffer*

## Executive Summary

The University of Texas at Austin (UT) seeks a renowned scholar and skilled administrator to serve as the next dean of the Jackson School of Geosciences. By virtue of its public mission, culture of innovation, location, size, and rich history, UT is one of the highest-impact universities in the world. As the top public university in Texas and the flagship of The University of Texas System, UT is an influential catalyst for scientific, economic, and societal progress. As the chief academic and administrative officer of the largest geosciences program in the nation, the dean will provide strategic vision and operational leadership for all aspects of the Jackson School's academic enterprise, support and encourage excellence in research and scholarship and undergraduate and graduate education, and maintain a collaborative environment and community that supports the school's students, researchers, staff, faculty, and alumni.

Founded in 1883, the University's main campus spans 431 acres with a community of almost 54,000 students, 3,500 faculty, and more than 15,000 staff. The University's J.J. Pickle Research Campus is home to major research institutes and centers that include two of three units composing the Jackson School of Geosciences. In addition to its main and J.J. Pickle Research campuses, UT extends to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the McDonald Observatory in west Texas, the Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, and several cultural and historic sites across the state.

The Jackson School of Geosciences at UT is among the most highly-regarded Earth science organizations in the world, with top-ranked programs in geology, geophysics, and paleontology, as well as leading programs in energy, water, and planetary science, among others. In addition, the school oversees large curated collections at the J.J. Pickle Research Campus and off-campus resources such as the White Family Outdoor Learning Center. The school consists of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, one of the country's oldest geoscience departments, and two world-renowned research units: the Institute for Geophysics and the Bureau of Economic Geology. The school has significant depth and breadth, with more than 5,000 alumni, 550 graduate and undergraduate students, 120 tenure-track and research faculty members, 110 research staff and postdoctoral scientists, and 140 staff members.

The Jackson School is both old and new. It traces its origins to a Department of Geology founded in 1888 but became a separate unit at the level of a college on September 1, 2005. The school's formation resulted from one of the most generous gifts in the history of higher education when the late John A. and Katherine G. Jackson bequeathed endowments and assets to the University presently valued at over \$300 million.

In addition to providing financial and operational oversight to the school, the new dean will advance academic excellence and an inspiring vision for the future, deepen relationships across the University, and elevate the school's reputation globally. The successful candidate will also bring exceptional political savvy and financial acumen, be a passionate advocate for the school both inside UT and externally, and continue to foster a collegial and collaborative environment for the pursuit of an ambitious science agenda.

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



## Role of the Dean of the Jackson School of Geosciences

Reporting to the executive vice president and provost, the dean of the Jackson School oversees a budget of \$90 million, representing three units: the Bureau of Economic Geology, the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, and the Institute for Geophysics. Other offices overseen by the dean include Career Services, Business Services, Development and Alumni Relations, Communications, and Information Technology Services.

The dean provides leadership to the school and is responsible for all matters relating to its effective administration, including academic programs, personnel, budgets, alumni engagement, fundraising, and government and industry relations. The dean is expected to be a creative and collaborative leader and a strong advocate for research and teaching as well as an authentic advocate for the school's impact and potential. The dean will communicate with a broad range of constituencies, encouraging a culture of openness, innovation, and values that inspires and elevates the students, faculty, and staff across all three units.

The following positions make up the dean's leadership team:

- Assistant Dean of Academics and Student Affairs
- Associate Dean for Research
- Director, Institute for Geophysics
- Department Chair, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences
- Director, Bureau of Economic Geology
- Chief Business Officer
- Director of Communications
- Chief Development Officer



## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

As the chief academic and administrative officer of the Jackson School, the dean will provide strategic vision and operational leadership for all aspects of the school's academic enterprise, support and encourage excellence in research and scholarship and undergraduate and graduate education, while maintaining a collaborative environment and community that supports the school's students, researchers, staff, faculty, and alumni. Among the many responsibilities of the dean, the following areas have been identified as key leadership priorities for the continued success of the school:

### Advance Academic Excellence and a Vision for the Future

The dean will collaborate with members of the school to develop and promote a vision for the future of the Jackson School of Geosciences. This vision will inspire the school to a new level of excellence as the leader in geoscience across the breadth of disciplines and subdisciplines represented in the school, as well as its three-part mission of research, education, and public service. It will also serve to strengthen connection and collaboration across the school's units and to ensure a robust interdisciplinary environment where the school's scientific and educational approach is stronger as a whole than the sum of its parts. Each of the school's units is distinctive in its structure, mission, funding model, and strengths. The dean will understand and value each unit, consider their unique needs in decision making, and ensure a cohesive vision and strategy that advances the excellence of the overall school and its units.

The dean will continue to build and strengthen a research enterprise that works at the cutting edge of science across the spectrum of fundamental to applied research. They will lead efforts to actively recruit, retain, and develop top-tier tenure-track faculty, research faculty, and post-doctoral fellows to increase the breadth, depth, and quality of research and establish long-term, highly productive collaborations. The dean will oversee management of over \$60 million in research expenditures and \$25 in foundation dollars, ensuring the highest level of research quality and accountability for return on investment of those funds.

The dean will assure that the school continues to serve its students with academic programs and advising of the highest quality and effectiveness, promoting excellence through contemporary and forward-looking undergraduate and graduate programs that respond to the evolving needs of the field, the state of Texas, and society in general. The dean will create and manage innovative academic programs that leverage modern educational approaches – including robust experiential learning opportunities – to reach and engage an expansive population of students to meet the demand for highly skilled geoscientists and train the next generation of leaders for the private and public sectors, as well as academia.

### Enhance Relationships Across the Units and Across the University

The dean will work to enhance collaboration and shared vision across the school, recognizing the value of cross-unit collaboration as an optimal means to leverage their unique strengths to address some of the most pressing problems facing the Earth system today.

The dean will serve as the school's chief advocate and will pursue and further strengthen relationships across the University. The school has worked hard to build synergistic networks encompassing the University. The dean will continue this work, engaging proactively with other leaders to initiate and build productive partnerships that will achieve mutually beneficial outcomes and leverage complementary strengths. The university brings a tremendous wealth of programs that provide natural synergies with the school, as exemplified by the cross-colleges Energy and Earth Resources degree program. The dean will be a highly collaborative leader and a model University citizen in promoting and creating partnerships.

The dean will interact closely with the provost and other university leaders on state and federal matters to ensure that the school is well positioned to provide expert advice on issues important to Texas, the nation, and globally. They will advocate for university, state, and other resources on behalf of the school. Direct line-item funding from the state to the Jackson School is a mandate to undertake scientific research that is important to the well-being of Texans state-wide. Effective stewardship of this funding is critical for continued support.

### Promote and Increase the School's Reputation and Visibility

As the school's chief spokesperson, the dean will be the key architect for bringing greater recognition and prominence to the school through various venues. The dean will advocate regionally, nationally, and internationally for geosciences and the many societal benefits of the school's distinctive research, education, and service programs. The dean will communicate science and research results to a range of audiences through exceptional presentation skills.

Enhancing the school's reputation regionally and beyond also entails growing new and expanding existing partnerships with private industry, philanthropic foundations, other research institutes and universities to address specific issues and scientific educational programs that benefit Texas and society at large.

### Ensure the School's Long-Term Success and Operational Excellence

By leading in a thoughtful and creative way that increases opportunities for students, researchers, staff, faculty, and other stakeholders, the dean will be ensuring that the school functions effectively and efficiently as an operational unit. The dean will seek to understand and represent fairly the needs and interests of each of the school's units while advancing the greater good of the school.

The dean will become an expert on the school's financial landscape and will ensure its financial wellbeing. The dean is also responsible for the fiduciary obligations and operational and business practices of the school. The school is in a strong financial position with an annual budget of approximately \$90 million including funding from university allocations, research awards, and the school's significant endowment. Two of the school's three units are on soft funding from the state, federal government, and industry. With 13 units of business that comprise the school's budget, the finances are complex and require active and engaged oversight and management by the dean. In addition, the dean will monitor and assess the school's processes and organizational structures to ensure best practices, accountability, operational efficiencies, appropriate centralization and cost effectiveness of scale.

The dean will play a vital role in nurturing and further strengthening relationships with key entities in the federal and state government, as well as industry and foundations to increase funding opportunities for the school. The dean will be creative and entrepreneurial in identifying and developing diverse revenue streams—industry partnerships, educational programs, philanthropic opportunities, among others—to support the school's mission.

The dean will work collaboratively with the school's dedicated development team of eight— and development leadership at the institutional level – to support and enhance the school through increased fundraising, developing proactive alumni and donor outreach activities and fostering long-term relationships with constituents who benefit from and recognize the importance of geosciences research and education. The dean will develop compelling gift opportunities that will advance the interests of the school and build its base of philanthropic support, currently approximately \$20 million annually.

The intellectual capital and human resources are the foundation of the school and its future. Therefore, maintaining mentorship, training and professional development programs for researchers, faculty, and staff are critical responsibilities of the dean. Parallel to this effort will be retaining talent and developing mechanisms that further incentivize scientific excellence, research productivity, and technological developments.



Maintaining, upgrading and, as appropriate, expanding facilities, laboratories, and equipment will also remain vital to the long-term excellence of the school. Designing efficient ways to fund, upgrade, and expand infrastructure, research equipment and lab space, and physical and digital collections will be important long-term objectives and responsibilities of the dean.

### Cultivate Community across the School

UT Austin and the Jackson School of Geosciences are committed to creating a caring community, where all are students helping one another grow. The dean will embody and advance these values in support of all school members. The next dean will continue to inspire and motivate staff at all levels while also recruiting and retaining a talented workforce. Likewise, they will actively engage and communicate with students to understand their needs and advocate on their behalf. Given the many demographic and societal changes taking place state-wide, nationally and internationally, the next dean must also be attentive and sensitive to ensuring an organizational culture of openness, fairness, and transparency that celebrates a diversity of thought and expression and that promotes an environment of inclusion. The new dean must lend personal authority and passion to these efforts and ensure strong and consistent communications and collaborations across the school.

The Jackson School spans several buildings on The University of Texas at Austin main campus and at the J.J. Pickle research campus, which are seven miles apart. The dean will be actively present on both campuses to further reinforce community across the school and engage with faculty, faculty researchers, staff, and students across all programs.



## Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The dean of the Jackson School of Geosciences will present a notable record of achievement in research, education, leadership, and administration and should have a distinguished reputation based on peer-reviewed scholarship, research, and/or creative accomplishments that merit appointment at the rank of professor with tenure at the University.

In addition, strong candidates will have many of the following qualifications and personal characteristics, in no particular order:

- **Exhibit strong leadership:** The dean will be a vocal advocate for the school and its three units at university, national and international levels, bringing a charismatic personality that enhances visibility, inspires trust, and motivates others to embrace transformative science.
- **Ability to unify:** The dean will have the vision and talent to allow each of the three units to maintain their identity and operate differently, while collectively strengthening internal partnerships across campus.
- **Strong financial management experience:** The ability to manage three large units with three distinctive financial statements and 13 distinct profit and loss statements.
- **Envision external partnerships:** Successful candidates will have a track record of partnership-development with external stakeholders across all levels of government and relevant industries.
- **Implement strategic research initiatives:** For example, a recently initiated, school-wide strategic investment plan can be found at <https://www.jsg.utexas.edu/about/mission-vision/>.
- **Care for students:** The dean will bring a genuine concern for the multi-faceted needs of students, listening intently and working to support and foster student learning outcomes and growth, graduation, and career placement.
- **Political savvy:** As a strong advocate for the school, the dean will navigate deftly inside the university, as well as with state and federal policy makers.
- **Nimble in a fluid environment:** The dean can effectively attract, manage, and support staff and students while operating effectively within continually changing academic, scientific, and institutional environments.
- **Strong, compassionate colleague:** The dean joins a highly effective and close-knit group of deans, bringing collegiality.
- **Exceptional communications skills:** At a time of great change in higher education, the dean will bring exceptional communication skills, conveying changes as they occur and offering support while doing so.
- **Emotional intelligence:** The dean will be a calming force during a fluid time, knowing when to speak and when to hold their thoughts, and will be seasoned, patient, and focused.

# Jackson School of Geosciences

## Overview

The Jackson School of Geosciences at The University of Texas at Austin is among the most well established and well-regarded geoscience programs in the world. The school includes the University's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, one of the country's oldest geoscience departments, and two world-renowned research units, the Institute for Geophysics and the Bureau of Economic Geology. The school is home to the world's largest academic geoscience communities with more than 5,000 alumni, 550 graduate and undergraduate students, 120 tenure track and research faculty members, 110 research staff and postdoctoral scientists, and 140 support staff.

The Jackson School is both old and new. It traces its origins to a Department of Geology founded in 1888 but became a separate unit at the level of a college on September 1, 2005. The school's formation resulted from one of the most generous gifts in the history of higher education when the late John A. and Katherine G. Jackson bequeathed endowments and assets to the university presently valued at over \$300 million.

## Mission

The Jackson School of Geosciences seeks to advance the understanding of Earth as a system, its resources, and environment, for the lasting benefit of humankind. Combining innovative research with educational experiences, we work to train future generations of geoscience leaders.

## Vision

The goals of the Jackson School of Geosciences are to:

- Address fundamental geosciences questions regarding Earth's transitions over space and time. We will lead research in the areas of Earth science that directly relate to societal challenges of the 21st century, including water, energy, natural hazards, natural resources, climate, life, land use, and soils.
- Foster a community of scholars that includes collaborative research groups that promote transformative research at the interfaces between traditional disciplines. We will develop new programs and capabilities by not only working between units within the Jackson School, but also collaborating with other schools and colleges at The University of Texas at Austin, as well as at the state, national, and international levels.
- Provide world-class education for students at all levels by involving them in research, offering comprehensive, innovative curricula and field and practical experiences, focusing on student learning outcomes, and preparing them for successful careers so they can create, innovate, and lead the geosciences into the future.

## Academics

As the world's largest academic geosciences community with dozens of state-of-the-art lab facilities, the school offers opportunities to collaborate on science that cuts across disciplines. Students have a chance to work with scientists at the Jackson School, throughout the University and with partners around the country and the world.

## Undergraduate

Undergraduates at the Jackson School have eight-degree options, anchored by fundamental courses taken by all majors during their first two to three years. Students enter as Geological Sciences entry level or Environmental Science entry level majors and, after completion of freshman requirements, can be admitted to one of the degree options. The following undergraduate degrees are offered:



- B.S. Climate System Science
- B.S. Environmental Science
- B.S. General Geology
- B.S. Geophysics
- B.S. Hydrology and Water Resources
- B.S. Teaching
- B.S. Geosystems Engineering
- B.A. Geological Sciences

Minors are offered in Computational Geosciences; Geosciences; Hydrology; and Sedimentology and Earth Surface Processes.

## Graduate

The Jackson School of Geosciences is one of the largest and most prestigious Earth science programs in the world. Graduate students have access to faculty and researchers in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Bureau of Economic Geology and the Institute for Geophysics. The combined academic and scientific power cuts across disciplines and offers students an unmatched breadth and depth of education and research opportunities. The following graduate degrees are offered:

- Ph.D. Geosciences
- M.S. Geosciences
- M.A. Geosciences
- M.S. Energy and Earth Resources
- M.A. Energy and Earth Resources

The Jackson School offers a certificate program in Machine Learning and Data Analytics in Geosciences, which is open to all UT Austin graduate students.

## Research

Research at the Jackson School of Geosciences occurs across themes that encompass the entire Earth system and other planetary bodies in our solar system. The broad themes explore the linkages between Earth processes and systems and bring the fundamental geoscience disciplines together in a way that encourages collaboration and interdisciplinary research.

Students are encouraged to get involved with research at every academic stage, including undergraduate students. There are ample opportunities to work with experts at each of our three world-class research units. The researchers across these units are leaders in their field and often work on the frontiers between disciplines where major developments are taking place.

The Jackson School of Geosciences is home to over 30 programs and centers. View them [here](#).

## About The University of Texas at Austin

### Overview

By virtue of its public mission, culture of innovation, location, size, and rich history, The University of Texas at Austin (UT) is one of the highest-impact universities in the world. As the top public university in Texas and the flagship of The University of Texas System, UT is an influential catalyst for scientific, economic and societal progress.

Founded in 1883, the University's main campus spans 431 acres with a community of almost 54,000 students, 3,500 faculty, and more than 15,000 staff. In addition to its main campus, UT extends to the J.J. Pickle Research Campus, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the McDonald Observatory in West Texas, the Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, and several cultural and historic sites across the state.

The University is a leader in energy, AI, entrepreneurship and national security, and its graduate programs in accounting, petroleum engineering, geology, Latin American history, and sociology of population rank No. 1 in the United States. UT is among the top producers of doctoral degrees in the nation, and its alumni and faculty include Nobel laureates.

In total, UT offers more than 150 undergraduate degree programs and 230 graduate programs across 19 colleges and schools in the sciences, arts, humanities, and professions:

[Cockrell School of Engineering](#)

[McCombs School of Business](#)

[College of Education](#)

[Moody College of Communication](#)

[College of Fine Arts](#)

[School of Architecture](#)

[College of Liberal Arts](#)

[School of Civic Leadership](#)

[College of Natural Sciences](#)

[School of Information](#)

[College of Pharmacy](#)

[School of Law](#)

[Dell Medical School](#)

[School of Nursing](#)

[Graduate School](#)

[School of Undergraduate Studies](#)

[Jackson School of Geosciences](#)

[Steve Hicks School of Social Work](#)

[Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs](#)

A globally recognized research leader and member of the Association of American Universities, UT attracted more than \$1 billion for research in 2023-24. The University is home to the fastest supercomputers for open research in the world. The Department of Defense designated UT's Applied Research Laboratories as one of five University Affiliated Research Centers for the Navy, and the University is a major collaborator with the Army Futures Command, among many other government agencies and organizations. The lab of Jason McLellan, a faculty member in the Department of Molecular Biosciences, was critical to the development of COVID-19 vaccines.

### Rankings and Research: By the Numbers

- No. 7 among American public universities, U.S. News & World Report
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- No. 6 among U.S. universities in research financed by the National Science Foundation
- No. 3 in the world for most patents granted (UT System-wide), National Academy of Inventors
- No. 18 for scientific research, Nature Index
- No. 19 most innovative school, U.S. News & World Report
- 55 graduate programs ranked among the top 10, U.S. News & World Report
- \$1.14 billion in research expenditures
- 7,000+ peer-reviewed articles published
- 116 patents issued, U.S & foreign
- 194 invention disclosures filed

The University's holdings comprise more than 170 million objects, including a Gutenberg Bible and other rare books, manuscripts, photographs, artworks, and artifacts from natural history to pop culture in eight museums and 12 libraries. The Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library was the first presidential library to be located on a college campus.

Over the past decade, the campus has undergone a significant modernization and expansion of its research, academic and community spaces. Recent projects added new state-of-the-art facilities, high-tech labs, and dynamic collaboration spaces that are transforming the student and faculty experience. The University's large and diverse student body, storied history, strong and supportive community and rich tradition have given rise to a proud alumni base of more than 500,000. Among UT's many well-known alumni are Michael Dell, Laura Bush, Jenna Bush Hager, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Matthew McConaughey, Kevin Durant, Wes Anderson, Robert Rodriguez, Renee Zellweger, Owen Wilson, Marcia Gay Harden, Sanya Richards Ross, Sam Rayburn, James Baker, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Brené Brown, Jim Allison, Rex Tillerson, Bill Moyers and Walter Cronkite, as well as current Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.







## Austin, Texas

Located beside the picturesque Hill Country of Central Texas, Austin is the state capital and the 4th largest city in Texas, which is among the top five most diverse states in the nation. As the 11th-largest city in the United States, Austin is a vibrant and rapidly growing economic hub, widely regarded as a friendly, active and innovative community. It is consistently acclaimed as a national creative center that attracts talented people from across the world.

Austin is home to corporate headquarters for Fortune 500 companies such as Oracle, Dell, Whole Foods, Tesla and many successful tech startups. Major companies such as Amazon, AMD, Apple and Google chose Austin as home for major research and development offices in large part to draw from the highly skilled talent the University produces.

## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting the University of Texas at Austin in this search. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by April 28, 2025.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Melody Rose, Ph.D., Suzanne Teer, and Randi Miller

[UTAustinGeoSciDean@wittkieffer.com](mailto:UTAustinGeoSciDean@wittkieffer.com)

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