



Senior Executive Director Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies

Leadership Profile

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WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) seeks a dynamic leader to serve as the senior executive director of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI). HRI has spent the last two decades working to ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable Gulf of Mexico. The institute has grown from an idea to an international research institute that generates more than \$20 million annually in research support across nine diverse research programs.

Reporting directly to the president of TAMU-CC, the senior executive director will directly supervise two associate directors, six endowed chairs and three HRI Chairs. The institute employs a diverse staff of research scientists and technicians, administrative support professionals, and undergraduate and graduate students. The total number of staff ranges between 150 and 180, depending on active grant status. The next senior executive director will play a key role in identifying opportunities for impactful research, diversifying institute funding, maintaining HRI's positive organizational culture and further enhancing the institute's reputation.

TAMU-CC is seeking a leader with experience managing a multi-purpose organization with a marine science focus, preferably an individual with broad experience in both academia and resource management and/or policy associated with a federal agency, state agency, nongovernmental conservation organization or private business.



HRI is part of TAMU-CC – a vibrant, relatively young doctoral granting university and Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). With approximately 12,000 students from 47 states and 54 foreign nations and 1,318 faculty and staff, it combines a heritage of teaching excellence with innovation in research and community engagement. It offers a highly talented faculty and an array of undergraduate and graduate degrees, including doctoral programs, offered in the six academic colleges: Business, Education and Human Development, Liberal Arts, Nursing and Health Sciences, and Science and Engineering, as well as University College. In late 2018, TAMU-CC achieved R2 Doctoral University-High Research Activity classification by the Carnegie Commission of Higher Education, which further promotes the university's culture of innovation and research.

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.

Role of the Senior Executive Director

The senior executive director will directly supervise two associate directors, six endowed chairs and three HRI Chairs. The institute employs a diverse staff of research scientists and technicians, administrative support professionals, and undergraduate and graduate students. The total number of staff ranges between 150 and 180, depending on active grant status. The senior executive director oversees an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.5 million and an ongoing research budget of some \$20 - \$27 million, depending on active grant status.

The senior executive director reports directly to the president of TAMU-CC. Assignments are received in the form of broad goals or areas of responsibility. There is considerable latitude for decision making. The senior executive director must be able to interpret and/or evaluate complex science and policy information and use results to adjust the institute's strategic plan to keep HRI in a leading position in Gulf



of Mexico, national and international marine affairs. Duties are highly varied and complex. Significant independent action and judgment is required, subject to general university-wide policies. The senior executive director administers a complex budget that includes private, federal and state funds and interaction with several foundation boards. The senior executive director is expected to actively pursue funding from a broad array of philanthropic, corporate, foundation and earned revenue funding sources, in addition, to those government sources common to marine research.

The senior executive director may continue as an active researcher where it supports HRI's strategic plan and in support of interdisciplinary efforts of chairs. The senior executive director is not expected, nor encouraged, to maintain a staffed field or laboratory research program.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next senior executive director will join a thriving institute and play a key role in its future development. Below are several areas where this individual will be expected to contribute to the future success of HRI:

Identify opportunities for impact: HRI was established with the goal of supporting impactful research on issues facing the Gulf of Mexico. Over the years, the institute has gained a strong reputation for relevant research that impacts communities locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. The next senior executive director will be expected to maximize this foundation by supporting existing research, but also by working with HRI leadership, research partners and external stakeholders to identify future areas of interest and need related to Gulf of Mexico research. The senior executive director will be

expected to have a macro view of the major issues facing the Gulf of Mexico, as well as an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the scientific, economic and policy impacts of these issues.

Diversify institute funding: Building off a landmark gift that founded HRI, the institute has grown tremendously in recent years and the senior executive director currently oversees an annual budget of more than \$20 million. While the next senior executive director will be responsible for ensuring continued success in securing federal and state funds, this individual will also be expected to identify new funding sources, including expanding philanthropic, corporate and foundation gifts and partnerships. The senior executive director should have the ability to engage all funding sources effectively and ensure proper stewardship of these resources.

Maintain organizational culture: As research efforts have grown, so have the number of individuals working at HRI. While this growth presents some organizational changes, the next senior executive director will be expected to maintain some of the key elements of HRI's culture: a dedication to teamwork, the ability to collaborate across research areas, a strong commitment to delivering impactful research and a willingness to take risks. This individual will need to be an effective and inspiring communicator internally, a relationship builder and a supporter of those within the organization.



Enhance reputation: The senior executive director will be expected to build off HRI's already strong reputation and lead the institute to greater prominence. This will include significant work representing HRI at local, state, national and international levels. The senior executive director will be expected to have the political savvy and a broad understanding of issues related to the Gulf of Mexico to interact with a wide range of stakeholders. This person needs to be able to communicate clearly, effectively and enthusiastically in one-on-one interactions, small group meetings and large presentations, as well as ensure marketing efforts that promote the work of HRI and its impact.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

TAMU-CC is seeking a leader with experience managing a multi-purpose organization with a marine science focus, preferably an individual with broad experience in both academia and resource management and/or policy associated with a federal agency, state agency, nongovernmental conservation organization or private business. The senior executive director must be:

- a marine scientist or professional in a related field (law, economics, etc.) with broad experience in coastal or ocean sciences, policy or law;
- thoroughly familiar with scientific research;
- well grounded in building and implementing complex initiatives;

- comfortable in a collegial academic environment;
- committed to HRI's intellectual mission;
- familiar with and active in research, resource management or policy directly related, or applicable, to the Gulf of Mexico;
- an experienced fundraiser with a desire to actively support philanthropic, corporate, foundation and earned revenue fundraising initiatives; and
- able to actively support, participate in and promote organizations that advance HRI's mission and vision for the future of the Gulf of Mexico.

International experience, especially in Mexico and/or Cuba, is desirable. An advanced degree in science and a successful science-based career is desired. At least eight years of extensive and increasingly responsible leadership experience in successfully leading interdisciplinary science-based management activities, research initiatives or centers is also expected.

About the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies

Overview

Founded by a landmark donation from local newspaper publisher and noted conservationist Ed Harte, the Harte Research Institute (HRI) for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has spent the last two decades working to ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable Gulf of Mexico. The institute has grown from an idea to an international research institute that generates more than \$20 million annually in research support across nine diverse research programs.

The HRI Model

The Harte Research Institute is set apart from other marine research institutions by its use of the HRI Model, a unique interdisciplinary way of working that integrates the institute's science with economic, policy and sociological expertise. While its solutions are science-driven, the challenges facing the Gulf of Mexico can't be solved by science working alone. HRI scientists are encouraged to think broadly and pursue partnerships to create lasting solutions.

Mission

Science driven solutions for Gulf of Mexico problems.

Vision

The Gulf of Mexico is ecologically and economically sustainable.

Research Programs

HRI has expertise in the following nine research areas:

- **Biodiversity & Conservation:** The Biodiversity and Conservation Science Program focuses on knowledge and understanding of the great biodiversity of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and the best ways to conserve it for future generations. One of the first HRI projects, even before moving in to its new building in 2005, was to determine the total biodiversity of the Gulf of Mexico. That project culminated in 2009 after seven years of effort with the publication of "Gulf of Mexico-Origin, Waters, and Biota Volume 1 Biota" and placement of the entire dataset of information regarding 15,419 species online in *GulfBase*. The 40 taxa presented in both venues include the work of 140 authors/taxonomists from 80 institutions in 15 countries. The database of species and all the associated information is now open access for all scientists, managers and educators to utilize to better understand and manage the Gulf ecosystem. The main work of the Biodiversity and Conservation Science program today is maintenance of *GulfBase* and a new project (Biodiversity of the Southern Gulf of Mexico) off the northwestern Yucatan Peninsula on the Campeche Bank.

- **Ecosystems & Modeling:** The Ecosystems and Modeling group performs environmental research using a systems view of the coasts and oceans from the bottom-up. It focuses mainly on two topics: environmental flows and effects of deep-sea oil and gas activities. Its method, the systems perspective, integrates biotic and abiotic processes to perform applied and fundamental research on benthic ecosystems ranging from rivers to the deep-sea. Studies combine field work, laboratory analyses, ecoinformatics (i.e., ecological information technology), environmental statistics and modeling. Most importantly, the group integrates natural science findings with socioeconomic studies to create the basic science needed for sound policy and management.



- **Fisheries & Ocean Health:** The focus of the Fisheries and Ocean Health Lab is to provide scientific data for sustainable management of marine fisheries and ocean resources to ensure healthy environments. The research program is diverse but currently focuses on migration patterns of marine life using a variety of state-of-the-art electronic tracking devices, how marine animals interact with their habitats, and the vital role that estuaries and near-shore waters play in sustaining marine populations. Specifically, its research includes understanding the roles of apex predators in Gulf ecosystems, dolphin-fish migration patterns and life history, red snapper ecology and management, fish contaminant loads, and several projects dealing with numerous estuarine fishes such as spotted seatrout and red drum and their sustainable management.
- **Geospatial Sciences:** The Coastal & Marine Geospatial Lab seeks a better understanding of the dynamic links between geomorphology, sediments, hydrology, climate and biology that create the various environments of coastal zones. Researchers apply remote sensing, ground studies and geographic information systems to build time series of environmental conditions. These time series,

combined with data on processes such as sea-level rise, storms and human activities, are the chief tools for developing process-response models of geoenvironmental change. Maps and model results are used to help develop and apply environmental policy.

- **Marine Policy and Law:** The purpose of the Marine Policy and Law Program is to focus on the intersection between public policy/law and the natural and social sciences. The program examines important and timely topics such as planning for resilient coastal communities; more effectively managing offshore energy resources and dealing with energy-related infrastructure once its productive life is over; working with partners in Mexico and Cuba to address transboundary environmental issues in a cooperative and sustainable fashion; and improving its understanding how human behavior affects coastal and ocean ecosystems. Special emphasis is placed on examining the interaction of coastal and marine constituencies and policy makers of the Gulf of Mexico Region to improve the application of science to policy and enhance effective management of resources.
- **Socio-economics:** Humans and the natural environment are interconnected and should be perceived as one complex system. Humans' well-being depends on the integrity of the environment and the well-being of the environment depends on humans' stewardship and practices. It is critical to understand how one responds to the other so that sustainable management decisions can be adopted. Economics is the study of how humankind allocates its scarce resources given its unlimited wants. Increasing populations along the coasts as well as inland, climate change and economic uncertainty lead to increased pressure on natural resources. Thus, economics provides tools to address the issue of conservation and sustainable growth.
- **Coastal Conservation & Restoration:** The Coastal Conservation and Restoration group's interest in healthy habitats includes examining the response of organisms to changing environmental conditions. Its research has a strong field-based component and is supported by laboratory analyses and statistical approaches. The group develops tools, including benefit-cost analyses and restoration suitability indices, to support natural resource management decision-making. It examines the proficiency of restored habitats in replacing lost ecological functions, including water filtration, provision of nursery and feeding habitat for fish and invertebrates, shoreline stabilization, and enhancement of biodiversity. Because healthy habitats support productive coastal environments and resilient coastal communities, the team conducts extensive field research in oyster reef, salt marsh, Serpulid worm reef, and offshore oil platform habitats.
- **Coastal Ecosystem Processes:** Coastal ecosystems worldwide are being exposed to a growing suite of natural and human-derived stressors that cause declining water quality and ecosystem health. This group conducts applied research aimed at solving complex and pressing regional



environmental problems, recognizing that solutions will often require balancing environmental as well as human and economic needs. Its research focuses on understanding the key ecosystem processes affecting estuarine and coastal water quality and algal bloom dynamics. This research provides a sound scientific basis for management efforts aimed at solving water quality challenges. The group's research is diverse, but broadly focuses on understanding: 1) environmental drivers and ecosystem impacts of nutrient pollution, 2) ecology and drivers of harmful algal blooms, and 3) elemental cycling in coastal waters.

- **Marine Resources Development:** The coastline of Texas represents over 3,500 miles of open bays, marshes, reefs and tidal flats, containing a broad diversity of habitats supporting some of the most valuable fisheries resources in the Gulf of Mexico. As a result of increased fishing pressure and frequent environmental perturbations, the status of these resources is changing. This program is dedicated to the sustainable preservation and development of living resources of the Gulf of Mexico through aquaculture. Working with stakeholders within Texas, across the Gulf and other coastal states, and with international counterparts, its efforts will initially focus on improving availability of Texas oysters to Texas consumers as well as other states. At present, the Texas oyster fishery is, at best, unpredictable. With the recent changes in the marine environment and the continued demand for oysters, this group's research will pave the way to better understand how oyster aquaculture can contribute to the national oyster market demands and continue to support environmental sustainability within Texas bays. Because Texas is the only coastal state in the U.S. that doesn't practice oyster aquaculture, HRI has established the Texas Oyster Resource and Recovery Center in Palacios, Texas. With funding from the RESTORE Act, HRI will be able to provide both conservation scientists and aquaculturists the necessary resources for improving ecosystem benefits from oysters and training a workforce for sustainable production of oysters. This group's research efforts focus on providing the state with basic information regarding the potential for oyster aquaculture in Texas bays: carrying capacity, development of siting models, environmental impact, effect on biodiversity and genetic diversity, growth modeling, best management practices, ecosystem services and economic cost analysis.

History

- **2000:** In 2000, Ed Harte approached Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to donate \$46 million to create and establish a new research institute dedicated to promoting excellence in conservation, research and innovative public policy in the Gulf of Mexico. This new institute would promote tri-national relationships between scientists from the United States, Mexico and Cuba.
- **2001:** In September 2001, Dr. John "Wes" Tunnell, Jr. was appointed Associate Director and the new institute was officially named the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. Over the next several years, the organization and structure of HRI was developed, the research areas were determined and the university's first Ph.D. program was implemented.
- **2005:** Following his retirement as university president, Dr. Robert Furgason became HRI's first Executive Director. Under Ferguson's leadership, HRI hired its endowed chairs and research staff; received licence and began its work in Cuba; and sponsored its first three underwater expeditions. HRI moved into its new home on campus in November 2005.

- **2006:** In 2006, the first State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit was held in Corpus Christi, Texas. This international event brought together leaders from science, industry, government and non-governmental organizations to reinforce the importance of sound science supporting sustainable economic growth of this vital ecological and economic resource.
- **2007:** Dr. Larry McKinney, retired director of Coastal Fisheries and senior director of Aquatic Resources for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, was named as HRI's Executive Director.
- **2012:** In 2012, with support from the Coastal Conservation Association and the Harte Research Support Foundation, HRI established the Center for Sportfish Science and Conservation, the first research center for the study of sportfish in the western Gulf of Mexico.
- **2015:** After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, HRI was selected to lead Texas OneGulf, one of two Centers of Excellences in the state granted federal RESTORE Act dollars to advance research into ongoing impacts from the oil spill and other long-term issues that threaten the health and sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico.

About Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Overview

TAMU-CC is a vibrant, relatively young doctoral granting university and Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). With approximately 12,000 students from 47 states and 54 foreign nations and 1,318 faculty and staff, it combines a heritage of teaching excellence with innovation in research and community engagement. It offers a highly talented faculty and an array of undergraduate and graduate degrees, including doctoral programs, offered in the six academic colleges: Business, Education and Human Development, Liberal Arts, Nursing and Health Sciences, and Science and Engineering, as well as University College.



TAMU-CC possesses the key elements to support its move to the next level among its peers as a major Hispanic-serving research university. In late 2018, TAMU-CC achieved R2 Doctoral University-High Research Activity classification by the Carnegie Commission of Higher Education, which further promotes the university's culture of innovation and research. The university's strategic plan, [Momentum 20/20](#), lays out a bold agenda for developing recognized programs in areas important to the region and nation. To achieve this goal, the university has begun to strengthen and grow its infrastructure to support existing and promising new programs. Services and operations dedicated to student recruitment, retention and welfare will be expanded to meet increased student demands and enhance the educational experience for all. The university will soon be starting a strategic planning process that will outline future goals for the institution beyond Momentum 20/20.

TAMU-CC is a member of the Texas A&M University System – a network of eleven universities, seven state agencies and a comprehensive health science center. As a member of the Texas A&M University System, the school benefits from a range of centralized resources, increased visibility and political clout, and opportunities to collaborate in mutually beneficial ways with peers across member institutions and associated agencies.

TAMU-CC has a beautiful campus located on a coastal island of 240-acres surrounded by the waters of the Corpus Christi and Oso bays – the only university located on its own island. TAMU-CC was ranked first on Best College Reviews' list of "50 Best Colleges by the Sea." Just eight miles from downtown Corpus Christi, the natural setting is enhanced by its modern, attractive, and state-of-the-art classroom buildings and support facilities. With a population of over 300,000, Corpus Christi, Texas is the largest Texas city south of San Antonio, as well as a coastal city, making TAMU-CC highly attractive to prospective students from throughout the region and beyond.

Mission

TAMU-CC is on a trajectory to achieve national recognition as evidenced by the quality of its faculty and staff, the success of its students, the connectedness of its alumni and the excellence of its academic and student life portfolios. It is committed to becoming one of the leading centers of higher education in the Gulf of Mexico region while serving the intellectual, cultural, social, environmental and economic needs of South Texas. TAMU-CC is committed to invigorating and strengthening the region and state through its educational programs, research initiatives and outreach efforts. Its strategic location on the Gulf of Mexico and on the cultural border with Latin America provides a basis for gaining national and international prominence.

Leadership

Kelly M. Miller is in her 26th year at the Island University having assumed the role of President of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in August 2017. She previously served as provost & vice president for academic affairs, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and director of the School of Arts, Media & Communication, as well as Chair for the Department of Communication & Theatre and professor of communication. Since assuming the role of president, she has assembled a leadership team that is highly

collaborative, transparent, pro-active, innovative, and student focused. Dr. Miller and the entire president's cabinet, as well as faculty and staff, are committed to becoming an emerging research university with unparalleled commitment to every student's success, closing gaps in achievement, and delivering a robust campus experience.



Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile and a CV or resume. WittKieffer is assisting Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by March 19, 2020. Application materials, nominations and inquiries can be directed to Ryan Crawford and Robert Luke at TAMUCC-HRI@wittkieffer.com. The consultants can be reached through the desk of Marietta DeMauro, executive search coordinator, at 630-575-6975.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is an Equality Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.