Position Guide

The Arboretum at Penn State

Director - The Smith Endowed Directorship of The Arboretum at Penn State

https://arboretum.psu.edu/
POSITION: Director—The Smith Endowed Directorship of The Arboretum at Penn State

REPORTS TO: Vice President for Outreach
Penn State University

LOCATION: University Park, Pennsylvania

MISSION

The mission of The Arboretum at Penn State is to engage the academic strengths of the University in promoting scholarship and education about plants and their history and importance on earth.

VISION

The Arboretum at Penn State strives to be a place of beauty and renewal, a venue for the arts, and a pathway to discovery and enrichment.

CORE VALUES

We are dedicated to excellence in design, collections, and programming in service to the mission of the University.

ABOUT THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE

Through generous philanthropy and former Arboretum Director Kim Steiner’s visionary leadership, Penn State has developed one of the most vibrant and dynamic arboreta in the world, synthesizing science, agriculture, and art. The Arboretum has become a beloved destination for Penn State students, local citizens and families, and visitors from throughout the region and beyond.
The Arboretum is an expression of the research excellence and creativity of the University that serves as a laboratory for dozens of courses, student research, and engagement projects. Its rental venues are popular for both university and private events. Visitors come to experience beauty and tranquility, to spend “quality” time in the wonderful Children’s Garden, and to benefit from the Arboretum’s growing outreach programs.

The Arboretum occupies a 370-acre interspace between the University Park campus, residential housing, and an interstate highway. The land adjacent to central campus contains 25-acres of botanic gardens and developed landscape constructed and endowed with $37 million in philanthropy over the last 15 years. A unique, 3-acre pollinator and bird garden has recently been developed, and a new art museum at the edge of the botanic gardens, scheduled for completion in 2023, will also house the Arboretum staff and its operations. Pending additional philanthropic support, more gardens and a conservatory are planned. Together, the Arboretum and art museum will become the core of a planned university cultural district.

According to Kim Steiner, professor of Forest Biology and former Director of the Arboretum, the new museum will “fulfill our long-standing vision of the Arboretum as a venue for the arts as well as a place of beauty and education about the natural world.”

**Programs**

**Education:** Education and engagement are key elements of the Arboretum’s mission. The Arboretum serves local, regional, national, and international audiences through a variety of educational and experiential events and programs, both online and in the gardens. Interpretive signage, informational brochures, and guided tours complement programmatic offerings. In addition, the Arboretum plays both active and passive roles in the University’s resident education programs, as dozens of instructors utilize the resources of the Arboretum each year.

**Research:** The Arboretum at Penn State is designed in partnership with the scientists and scholars at Penn State and continues to serve as a site for research for a variety of University-based programs. These have included projects by faculty in Biology, Entomology, Ecosystem Science and Management, Plant Science, Plant Pathology, Education, Landscape Architecture, Visual Arts, Theatre, and others.
**Conservation**: The Arboretum at Penn State was designed to support diverse and thriving ecosystems of plants and animals, showcase the importance of biodiversity, and provide guidance and inspiration for visitors to take steps to promote conservation.

In a short time, The Arboretum at Penn State has become one of the most popular features of the University Park campus.

**ABOUT PENN STATE UNIVERSITY**

As Pennsylvania’s sole land-grant institution and its largest public university, Penn State is a shared public asset that provides opportunity and enriches the quality of life for residents of the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our combined efforts and talents as well as our scale make Penn State an instrument for change and impact. Not only are we educating Pennsylvanians from all walks of life, we are also fueling the state’s economy, serving our communities, and addressing global challenges.

Penn State Outreach is a leader in community engagement. In 2021, the University was selected by the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) to receive the 2021 Ryan, Moser, Reilly Excellence in Community Engagement Institutional Leadership Award. Penn State received the award for "exemplary leadership in advancing the field of community-engaged scholarship."

As one university with the resources of 25 campus locations—including a medical college, two law schools, a school of graduate professional studies, and an online World Campus—we are setting students up for greater career potential and empowering them to positively impact the world. Our unique educational model makes a Penn State degree accessible to students from all backgrounds, from first-generation students to adult learners.
THE OPPORTUNITY

The Arboretum at Penn State has seen significant growth since its inception in 2007. Building on that progress, we now seek a leader who will develop a long-term vision and master plan for the next decade and beyond. That plan will need to address all aspects of the Arboretum, including horticulture, ecosystem design and management, research, and education. The Director will be expected to build wide support for this master plan among all levels of the Arboretum and the broader community of Penn State University.

Since 2016, President Eric Barron has led the way with his vision for a campus cultural destination that will bring together many of those resources in one highly visible, beautifully designed, and easily accessible location. The first stage of fulfilling this vision is the relocation of the Palmer Museum of Art to The Arboretum at Penn State. Located along Bigler Road, the new Museum will be a physical gateway to the Arboretum’s H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens, one that will offer exciting opportunities for collaboration, discovery, and shared learning experiences. The new state-of-the-art Museum building, designed by Allied Works Architecture, will house the administrative offices of the Arboretum and Palmer Museum. When the new 71,000-square-foot building is completed in late 2023, the Arboretum and the Palmer Museum will share education and event spaces. This major building project presents myriad opportunities for collaboration on special events, education and outreach programs, and outdoor art installations. The administration, scheduling, and operation of these programs and activities in addition to rental events, an important source of earned revenue for both organizations, will require the Directors of the Arboretum and Palmer Museum to work closely together to promote cooperation and mutual benefit.

The Director must be dedicated to expanding the Arboretum’s outreach through the development and execution of innovative educational programs and direct community engagement and should explore opportunities to extend the current constituency of supporters and participants by engaging individuals who represent a geographically, racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse base.
This individual will be expected to guide and participate directly in fundraising for priority initiatives and will re-examine the best use of the more remote parts of the Arboretum containing open space and natural area that offer attractive opportunities for ecological restoration and other strategically planned development. As part of the original Master Plan, a unique conservatory has already been designed for a future phase to complement the priorities that have been completed—Conservatory Terrace, Children's Garden, Pollinator and Bird Garden, and Fountain Garden. Philanthropy will continue to determine the pace of further development.

University and community enthusiasm for the Arboretum is strong, and this enthusiasm can be enhanced through continued, mission-driven expansion.

THE POSITION SUMMARY

The Director position is an exceptional opportunity for an inspiring and ambitious leader to further the growth of the Arboretum by strengthening its integration with the academic life of the University, expanding public engagement, and continuing robust philanthropic development. The Director, who reports to the Vice President for Outreach, oversees a dedicated staff of approximately 14 and will work closely with the Director and staff of the Palmer Museum of Art in the new Museum building to drive visitation, earned revenue opportunities, and to create an exceptional cultural destination and experience for all.
CANDIDATE PROFILE

We seek an individual with a strong record of effective leadership of a public garden, arboretum, or affiliated organization. The successful candidate must have experience with articulating an organizational vision and identifying and coalescing support for that vision. Experience in a research institution or an affinity and understanding of research activities and demonstrated success in working collaboratively across academic disciplines is preferred.

The ideal candidate must have a proven track record of successful fundraising, as well as experience in working with a diverse range of supporters, including those within the local community and others with an interest in horticulture and education.

Candidates must display strong communication and personal presentation skills, including the ability to speak extemporaneously and to write effectively for a wide range of audiences including donors, university officials, foundation professionals, corporate executives, and key governmental administrators.

Candidates must have experience managing a team and demonstrated ability to develop staff. This person will be able to instill confidence through their actions and communicate expectations clearly. The successful candidate will have experience with strong budget management, fundraising, working with multiple campus and community stakeholders, and strong verbal and written communications. This person will also have shown a demonstrated commitment to equity and inclusion.

Candidates must have high levels of organizational skills, displaying advanced planning, resourcefulness, and creativity in addressing priority initiatives and unforeseen problems. This executive should be entrepreneurial and willing to seize opportunities and express curiosity and an openness to new ideas. Decisive and accountable decision-making is required.
A commitment to existing standards of excellence in design, materials, and maintenance is essential.

Penn State is committed to and accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its forms. We embrace individual uniqueness to foster a culture of inclusive excellence that supports both broad and specific diversity initiatives, leverages the educational and institutional benefits of diversity, and engages all individuals to help them thrive. We value inclusive excellence as a core strength and an essential element of our public service mission. Please refer to the following link for Penn State University’s Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Policy: https://affirmativeaction.psu.edu/.

It is expected that candidates will have a record of distinguished achievement and one or more advanced degrees in plant biology, horticulture, landscape architecture, public garden management, or a related field. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to obtain an affiliate academic appointment in an appropriate academic unit if desired.

To apply, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at https://bit.ly/3o20Q1x (click on the Apply button at the bottom of the page).

To learn more about the programs and activities at The Arboretum at Penn State, please go to the following link: https://arboretum.psu.edu/.