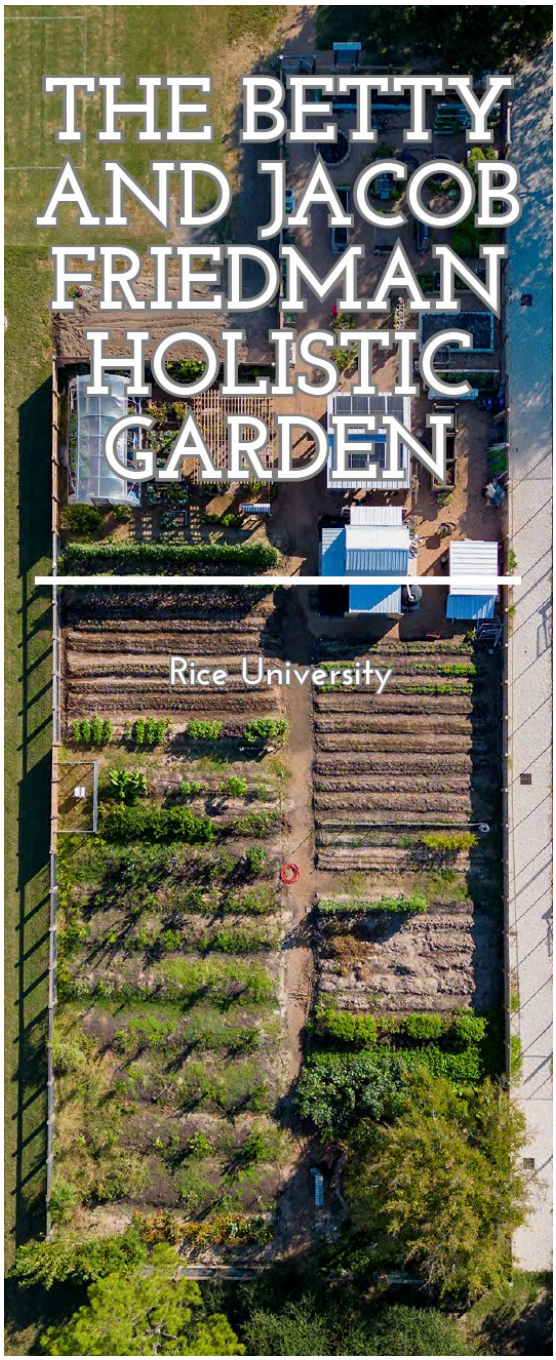
Director of the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden/Lecturer in BioSciences

Rice University

The Opportunity



Rice University invites applications and nominations for the position of **Director of the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden** and **Lecturer in BioSciences,** with an anticipated start date of January 1, 2027. We are seeking an entrepreneurial, operationally minded leader to direct the daily site operations, educational program, strategic vision, and community integration of this dynamic academic urban farm.

This role requires a dynamic "academic entrepreneur" who possesses advanced horticultural knowledge, physical site management capabilities, charismatic teaching skills, and collaborative, start-up-style business acumen. Operating at the intersection of practical horticulture, academic instruction, and interdisciplinary outreach, the Director will manage daily urban farm activities, budget allocation, organic crop production, and site infrastructure—including a greenhouse, solar array, rainwater collection, apiary, and composting systems. They will lead and mentor a team comprising a full-time Post-Graduate Fellow/Manager and student workers. As Lecturer in BioSciences, the Director will design and deliver popular undergraduate coursework in horticulture, sustainable agriculture, and related practitioner fields each semester.

Crucially, the Director will establish a strategic vision for generating revenue through produce sales, public workshops, and plant sales, while expanding volunteer initiatives, alumni and donor engagement, and community food system outreach. Beyond campus, the Director will serve as a strategic bridge builder—forging high-impact research, clinical health, and public partnerships across Rice University and the neighboring Texas Medical Center in areas such as garden therapy, public health, and patient wellness.

Required Qualifications

Candidates must have a master's degree in Public Horticulture, Sustainable Agriculture, or a related practitioner field; or a Ph.D. in Horticulture or a related discipline by the start date. They must have a proven track record in site operations, budget oversight, crop management, volunteer coordination, and inspirational educational instruction.

Procedure for Candidacy

To apply, please submit the following materials online apply.interfolio.com/193817: (1) cover letter; (2) curriculum vitae; (3) experience and vision statement covering operational leadership, crop management, and staff supervision (2 pages max); (4) statement of teaching philosophy (1 page max); and (5) contact information for three references. The experience and vision statement and statement of teaching philosophy may also include plans for fostering an equitable and inclusive learning environment and a gardening team. Applications that are received by **November 16, 2026** will receive full consideration, but we will continue reviewing applications until positions are filled. For additional information, please visit our website here or contact Dominique Oumar (dominique.oumar@rice.edu), Director of Administrative Operations of the Wiess School of Natural Sciences.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Statement

Rice University is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian university that aspires to path-breaking research, unsurpassed teaching, and contributions to the betterment of our world. Rice fulfills this mission by cultivating a diverse community of learning and discovery that produces leaders across the spectrum of human endeavor. In our candidate pools, we seek to attract greater representation of women, scholars of color, people with disabilities, veterans, and others who have historically been underrepresented in the health sciences; accelerate progress in building a faculty and staff varied in background and thought; and maintain an environment that fosters interaction and understanding within our community.

Rice University is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Qualified applicants are considered without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, genetic information, disability or protected veteran status. We encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply.

About the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden

Established in 2018, the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden introduces the Rice community to the beneficial social, environmental, and public health impacts of gardening. Grounded in the principle that gardening is restorative—improving quality of life and lowering risks for chronic conditions—the Garden functions as a model for sustainable urban agriculture and a vital Living Lab for experiential education, interdisciplinary research, and campus-wide sustainability initiatives.

Since its founding, the Garden has compiled a proven track record of impact, welcoming over 1,000 students through academic coursework, engaging hundreds of community volunteers, and supplying thousands of pounds of fresh produce directly to Rice serveries. Undergraduate leadership drives the site's daily vitality. Through hands-on courses like *Design and Practice of Community Agriculture* (BIOS 204), students design crop layouts, build soil health through active composting, manage organic pest control systems, and cultivate dedicated habitats for native pollinators.

Paid Student Garden Workers act as primary stewards of the site—managing crop production, poultry care, harvesting schedules, and produce invoicing for Dining Services while completing independent projects. Additionally, the 10-week Summer Internship in Sociohorticulture empowers students across academic disciplines to pursue self-directed research at the intersection of urban planning, public health, food policy, and agricultural science. Student-led organizations, including Rice Urban Agriculture and the Beekeeping Club, regularly utilize the site to practice sustainable food production and promote healthy lifestyle habits, complemented by weekly volunteer shifts open to all students.

Looking ahead, the Garden remains committed to climate-smart, resource-conserving practices that enhance biodiversity and campus wellness. Future endeavors will broaden community garden outreach, introduce hands-on public workshops, and launch new instructional coursework, such as *Gardening for Wellness*.

About Rice University & Houston

Rice University is a premier private research university situated on a 300-acre heavily forested campus in the heart of Houston's Museum District adjacent to the Texas Medical Center. Ranked among the nation’s top twenty universities, Rice combines the personalized advantages of a liberal arts college—including a 6:1 student-to-faculty ratio and a renowned residential college system—with the research output of a top-tier R1 institution. Opened in 1912, Rice is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and educates an extraordinary student body of approximately 9,500 undergraduate and graduate students. It is known for its impactful research, distinctive commitment to undergraduate and graduate education, and its close-knit, collaborative, and diverse community. Rice is currently undergoing unprecedented growth, adding 200 tenure-track faculty in the last five years, launching new research institutes, and constructing state-of-the-art academic buildings.

The University's eight schools — Architecture, the George R. Brown School of Engineering and Computing, Humanities, Jones Graduate School of Business, the Shepherd School of Music, the Wiess School of Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies — attract a diverse group of highly talented students from around the globe.

These activities take place on Rice’s tree-shaded campus, which is designated as the Lynn R. Lowrey Arboretum and often listed as one of the most beautiful campuses in the country. The

University has twelve residential undergraduate colleges and boasts excellent campus facilities and amenities, including a robust public art collection.

As the nation's fourth-largest city, Houston is a global, hyper-diverse metropolis offering world-class cultural amenities, thriving arts districts, and a low cost of living. Serving as a living laboratory for environmental and community health, Houston allows researchers and practitioners to directly address climate resilience, food systems, and urban population health.

Houston is one of only six American cities with resident professional companies in all four major performing arts: ballet, opera, theater, and symphony. Houston’s Museum of Fine Arts houses an extensive collection containing more than 51,000 artworks dating from antiquity to the present, and the city's Museum of Natural Science is an impressive five-venue complex that houses the Burke Baker Dome Theatre, Wortham IMAX Theatre, Cockrell Butterfly Center, and four floors of natural science exhibits. Additionally, Houston is home to the Menil Collection art museum, a 30-acre neighborhood of art.

Houston’s 52,912 acres of park space ranks first among the nation’s 10 most populous cities. The Armand Bayou Nature Center, Hermann Park, Houston Zoo, Cypress Trails, and the Mercer Arboretum and Botanical Gardens are just some of the many serene and beautiful outdoor landmarks to explore.

About the Wiess School of Natural Sciences

Led by Dean Thomas Killian, the Wiess School of Natural Sciences comprises 140 tenure-line faculty and approximately 1,800 students across six academic departments: BioSciences, Chemistry, Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences, Kinesiology, Mathematics, and Physics and Astronomy. The School offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees across all departments, Professional Science Master's programs, and PhD programs in fundamental physical and life sciences.

Wiess School faculty are world-renowned researchers and dedicated educators committed to pedagogical excellence. Experiential learning is a hallmark of the Natural Sciences student experience, with 85% of undergraduates participating in hands-on research alongside faculty prior to graduation. Faculty lead interdisciplinary research across campus and maintain active collaborations with national laboratories, space agencies (NASA), and clinical partners throughout the neighboring Texas Medical Center. The School houses cutting-edge core facilities, including advanced high-performance computing, cleanroom environments, spectroscopy and mass spectrometry suites, and dedicated environmental monitoring platforms.

Momentous: Personalized Scale for Global Impact

Under the leadership of current President Reginald DesRoches, Rice has outlined its bold vision for the future in a 10-year strategic plan, "Momentous": Rice will be the world's premier teaching *and* research university, delivering unparalleled personalized education and propelling breakthrough discovery to transform lives and better humanity. Rice will be internationally recognized for its ability to develop leaders prepared to address the world's complexities and for producing unparalleled foundational and applied research to lead discovery and life-changing advances toward i*nnovations in health, sustainable futures* and *thriving urban communities*. More information about this vision and strategic plan may be found at: https://momentous.rice.edu/

Facilities & Medical Center Proximity

Rice hosts over 1.5 million gross square feet of dedicated instructional and research space. Driven by strategic growth, recent landmark physical investments include the $152 million, 250,000-square-foot Ralph S. O'Connor Building for Engineering and Science, custom-built wet and dry research suites, high-performance computing facilities, and core suites for imaging, cleanroom environments, and spectroscopy.

Directly adjacent to campus lies the Texas Medical Center (TMC)—the largest medical complex in the world. With over 60 clinical and research institutions, TMC provides Rice faculty and

practitioners with unparalleled access to clinical registries, patient cohorts, collaborative health networks, and medical partnerships. Anchoring this interdisciplinary connection is the 477,000-square-foot BioScience Research Collaborative (BRC), a premier facility specifically designed to stimulate scientific discovery, health innovations, and clinical collaboration between Rice and TMC institutions.

Students

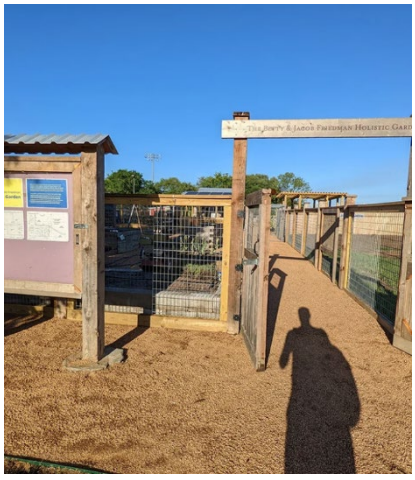
Rice University educates an extraordinary student body of undergraduate and graduate students characterized by high academic achievement, deep curiosity, and a strongly collaborative ethos. Admitted through an exceptionally selective process, Rice students bring diverse perspectives and top-tier academic talent from across the nation and around the globe.

The Wiess School of Natural Sciences serves approximately 1,300 undergraduate majors, 100 master's students, and 400 doctoral students across its six departments, while delivering the foundational mathematics and science coursework taken by the majority of all Rice undergraduates.

Within this community, students across disciplines utilize the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden as an active living laboratory for experiential education, plant, insect and sociohorticulture research, and leadership training

Faculty

Faculty at Rice University are internationally recognized scholars, dedicated educators, and collaborative leaders across disciplines. The university's 1,000 full-time faculty members include members of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, National Academy of Medicine, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, alongside recipients of prestigious national and international honors. Rice faculty maintain a robust research enterprise supported by federal agencies—including the NIH, NSF, DoD, DOE, and NASA—as well as major foundations and corporate partners.



The Wiess School of Natural Sciences comprises 140 tenure-line faculty across its six departments, complemented by a talented instructional faculty dedicated to educational innovation. Faculty maintain a close-knit learning environment, serving as institutional models for inclusive excellence within a university culture that deeply values collaboration, respect, and a "culture of care." They are also deeply committed to interdisciplinary scholarship, holding joint appointments across departments, schools and other institutions, and leading major university-wide research centers and institutes.

Finances and Research Support

Rice University operates from a position of financial strength, anchored by an endowment with a total market value of $8.5 billion—ranking among the top 20 higher education endowments in the nation and among the highest per-student endowments globally. The university's operating budget totals $1.1 billion, with endowment distributions funding approximately 40% of operating revenues as the university's largest single revenue source.

Extramural research expenditures across the university continue on a steep upward trajectory, exceeding $200 million annually, supported by federal agencies (NIH, NSF, DoD, DOE, NASA) and major philanthropic foundations.

The Wiess School of Natural Sciences has an operating budget of over $60 million annually. Total external research awards crossed $50 million in 2025-2026, showing continued growth even with recent changes in federal funding policy. The School leverages its resources and strategic university investments to fund excellent startup packages, core facilities, and doctoral fellowships.

Rice Values and Access and Institutional Excellence

Supported by the Office of Access and Institutional Excellence, the university actively fosters a welcoming and supportive environment where varied experiences, backgrounds, and intellectual perspectives enhance innovation and discovery, and all members of our community can thrive. We strive to create a campus culture that values collaboration, respect, and academic excellence by engaging with all areas of campus life to support meaningful connections and shared success. This commitment is rooted in Rice's core values—Responsibility, Integrity, Community, and Excellence—and its defining "culture of care".

Situated in Houston, one of the nation's most culturally diverse metropolises, Rice mirrors its host city with a student body comprising over 59% students of color and representation from over 80 countries.

Mission Statements

Rice University aspires to groundbreaking research and unsurpassed education for the betterment of our world. We fulfill this mission by cultivating curiosity to advance discovery, fostering connections to enhance collaboration, and empowering diverse leaders in an inclusive learning community that promotes excellence and student success through a culture of care.

The Wiess School of Natural Sciences advances fundamental understanding of the natural world and improves the human condition through pioneering research, while empowering future generations of discoverers and leaders through unsurpassed education in a collaborative, diverse and inclusive community.