Reporting to the Associate Vice-President, Research Services, the Director, Research Data Strategy will lead the strategic design, development and management of the University of Guelph’s vision for a cross-sectoral online platform for research data and analytics, Agri-food Data Canada, that enables transformative innovation in agriculture and food in Canada and the world. Funded by the University of Guelph’s $76.6 million Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) grant, entitled Food from Thought, the position is critical in supporting the achievement of the initiative’s goal of increasing our ability to leverage big data for the benefit of sustainable food production and biodiversity.

Food from Thought (FfT) is aimed at catalyzing a new digital agricultural revolution, and will put the University of Guelph at the forefront of global agri-food research institutes. Comprising 10 lead investigators and approximately 40 other faculty members, the FfT team aims to create an innovative agri-food research platform that will draw together stakeholders from the community, government, municipalities, industry, agriculture, and engineering consulting firms, to advance research knowledge, expertise and technology relating to agri-food and big data technologies.

The Director will be the main architect in developing an integrated, cross-university strategy and platform for big data management to underpin and accelerate Food from Thought research activities. This will include an integrated approach to governance, security, sharing, and curation of big research data generated by University of Guelph and other organizations, and establishing a platform for leading-edge, advanced analytics and modelling. Ultimately, the aim is to enable large-scale research innovation through better coordination and access to internal and external data, computing capacity and expertise, and stronger and better-supported partnerships with government and industry. One of the main deliverables and responsibilities of this position include leading the design, development and management of a new data and analytics portal entitled Agri-Food Data Canada (ADC) with the goal of enabling transformative research and innovation in agri-food.

The Director will:

- work closely with existing and new University of Guelph data science faculty, principal investigators, and research staff to integrate and strengthen the University’s data management and analysis capabilities across Food from Thought research teams and university facilities
- identify and develop effective partnerships with external partners to establish ADC and extend its scope, usefulness and the University of Guelph’s influence on the application of big data for research and innovation in agri-food
- represent the University of Guelph and Food from Thought initiative on external committees and organizations focused on coordinating big data management needs and approaches, such as SOScip, Compute Ontario and Compute Canada, and related independent research institutes, such as the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence
advise senior university leaders, including the Vice President (Research) and College Deans on investments in computing infrastructure to support food-related big data research needs, while increasing overall capacity in a coordinated and strategic manner.

The ideal candidate will have a PhD in data science, computer science, engineering, mathematics, statistics, or related field, and six (6) years of strategic data governance or management related experience. The incumbent will be expected to have significant experience in a research environment within the private sector, or academia, managing very large datasets and leading development of data governance, security, and utilization strategies across research projects and across disciplines. The incumbent will also have experience developing and negotiating partnerships and data sharing and access agreements.

Ideally, the incumbent will have educational and research experience in food and/or environmental science. In addition, the incumbent will have:

- Demonstrable information management and quantitative analysis skills, including working knowledge of IT infrastructure, technologies/platforms, and alignment of vendor solutions with strategic priorities.
- Deep familiarity with data management, predictive analytics, data visualization, applied statistical analysis and modelling.
- Experience in integrating, manipulating and analyzing complex, high-volume, multi-dimensional data from varying sources.
- Familiarity with contemporary big data solutions and statistical analysis packages.
- Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree (preferred but not mandatory).

Position Number 508-004
Classification P10*

Professional/Managerial Salary Bands [2]

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority.

At the University of Guelph, fostering a culture of inclusion is an institutional imperative. The University invites and encourages applications from all qualified individuals, including from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in employment, who may contribute to further diversification of our Institution.

*Tentative evaluation; subject to committee review.

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