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M UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS
AND NICHOLS ARBORETUM

Director



Director, Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

ABOUT MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NICHOLS ARBORETUM

MATTHAEI-NICHOLS OVERVIEW ([website](#))

The University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum (Matthaei-Nichols) has welcomed students, faculty, staff, and community members to its gardens, prairies, and woodlands for over 100 years. Matthaei-Nichols plays a special and multi-faceted role in the university. It serves as a sanctuary and recreational space for students and community members, a center for environmental stewardship and activism, a cherished venue for university and community hosted events, and an active research and teaching laboratory for sustainability and climate adaptation. Matthaei-Nichols also has a long and successful history of public outreach, education, and volunteerism that routinely engages both K-12 children and the community at large. In 2019, the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum served 485,000 visitors.

Matthaei-Nichols, an organization with two primary locations (the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and the Nichols Arboretum), is a living laboratory with core strengths in sustainability-focused research, experiential teaching and learning, conservation, and an emphasis on social justice and the integrated relationships between land, people, and society. Matthaei-Nichols provides the University of Michigan and its surrounding communities with rich, diverse, and enjoyable experiences with the natural world that deepen their understanding of sustainability, ecosystems, and the role of nature in their lives.

THE OPPORTUNITY

U-M seeks an inspiring and collaborative leader who will work with staff and partners across the university and beyond to develop and implement a bold vision for the next decade that builds off the organization's considerable strengths. Matthaei-Nichols is unique in offering abundant space near campus for research, teaching, and experiential learning, and has a knowledgeable and skilled staff that include ecosystem management practitioners and experts in sustainable farming, horticulture, informatics, environmental education, and community engagement. Matthaei-Nichols is a critical resource and partner with researchers and instructors from across campus, and regularly collaborates on high-impact research, teaching, and demonstration projects in areas that range from sustainability to renewable energy, agroecology, ecological restoration, and land use management. It has a rich history of community outreach and support of student-led projects and initiatives. Matthaei-Nichols gardens, natural spaces, and conservatory showcase UM's teaching and research, and provide educational and recreational activities for hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. The new leader of Matthaei-Nichols will capitalize on these strengths to expand the impact of this historic organization on the university and surrounding community.

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MATTHAEI-NICHOLS IN DETAIL

Matthaei-Nichols comprises four natural areas—the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, the Nichols Arboretum, the Horner/McLaughlin Woods, and the Mud Lake Bog—totaling 841.5 acres created through donations by the Matthaei and Nichols families among others and in collaboration with the City of Ann Arbor. The main building at Matthaei Botanical Gardens includes a 10,000+ ft² public conservatory with a collection of plants that range from tropical to desert biomes, along with five greenhouses totaling 24,000+ ft² used for plant propagation, research, teaching, and community outreach purposes. In addition, the botanical gardens site has formal display gardens, ponds, abundant trails, and natural areas including Fleming Creek, and is home to the U-M Campus Farm. The Nichols Arboretum, located on the eastern edge of central campus, houses an internationally recognized peony collection as well as three and a half miles of hiking and jogging trails, and is a valued outdoor recreation area frequented by the public, staff, faculty, and students. Horner/McLaughlin Woods is a ninety-acre plant and wildflower sanctuary with oak-hickory woodlands and old field terrain as well as several small woodland ponds and streams, and Mud Lake Bog is a unique natural area north of campus boasting an extensive swamp forest including a bog.

Matthaei-Nichols is an Escape

Matthaei-Nichols is a sanctuary and respite from the anxiety of our modern world. The gardens and natural areas provide an escape for university students, faculty, and staff as well as community members. Both the Matthaei Gardens and the Nichols Arboretum have secluded trails that are popular for strolling and jogging, and they provide both open fields and smaller areas for play for children of all ages. The gardens and art installations offer spaces for contemplation and meditation. In addition, the Matthaei Botanical Gardens Trail is a paved border-to-border trail that connects the Botanical Gardens to Washtenaw County's Parker Mill Park to the south, with connections to the regional Border-to-Border Trail, the local Gallup Park pathway, and beyond.

Matthaei-Nichols Engages both Campus and Community

Matthaei-Nichols partners with units across the university to support and enhance scholarship in the arts, humanities, engineering, and health and natural sciences. Matthaei-Nichols is frequently visited by classes that use its natural areas as laboratories to learn about ecology and environmental sciences and sustainability. Researchers rely on its natural spaces, greenhouses, and agricultural fields to conduct leading studies on topics ranging from migration of monarch butterflies, the medicinal properties of milkweed, principles of sustainable agriculture, and the evolution of herbicide resistance. Matthaei-Nichols also serves as a stage for the arts. For the past nineteen years, the Nichols Arboretum has hosted "Shakespeare in the Arb," a public performance developed in collaboration with U-M's Residential College.

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Matthaei-Nichols provides a unique landscape for engaging with the community. Matthaei-Nichols is among the most visible places for science outreach to K-12 students in Southeast Michigan, providing hands-on science-based learning to over 3500 children who visit on field trips. Matthaei-Nichols engages an incredible 1400 volunteers each year, many of them retirees and students interested in learning and contributing to sustainable practices. Additionally, the combination of indoor meeting spaces with outdoor terraces and spectacular gardens at Matthaei-Nichols provides a beautiful and unique setting for special events including weddings, receptions, retreats, and symposia.

Conservation and Sustainability are Fundamental to Matthaei-Nichols

Sustainability, conservation, and restoration are central to Matthaei-Nichols. Together the gardens and arboretum serve to protect and exhibit endangered, rare and unusual flora and fauna with the natural areas and horticultural plant collections showcasing over 4000 taxa from 100 plant families and roughly 20% of Michigan's native flora. One of the largest and best documented historic peony cultivar collections in North America is maintained in the Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum. Additionally, the unique native prairies, woodlands, and wetlands of Matthaei-Nichols conserve these important ecosystems and have been maintained using land management practices that focus on restoring ecological integrity and function to its land base.

The principles of sustainable agriculture are embedded in experiential learning and research at Matthaei-Nichols. The U-M Campus Farm at Matthaei Gardens creates authentic and high-impact research, teaching, and learning opportunities in sustainable food systems by increasing academic engagement and creating a learning community that fosters leadership development, on-farm carbon neutrality, and food grown for students by students. Revenue generated by the sale of produce to Michigan Dining in turn supports both student management and materials costs of this multi-stakeholder program.



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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is part of everything that happens at Matthaei-Nichols from the programming of gardens and exhibits to hiring and outreach and will be an unwavering focus of the new director.

Matthaei-Nichols welcomes all: there is no entrance fee for any of its attractions and signage,

brochures, and maps allow access to a multilingual audience. In addition, with the help of donors, Matthaei-Nichols provides a bus subsidy to K-12 students at Title One schools to support their visitation.

Matthaei-Nichols Celebrates Ecological and Cultural Diversity: The gardens are designed to acknowledge and celebrate Michigan's rich ecological diversity, as well as the diversity of plants and ecosystems from around the world. And, Matthaei-Nichols has partnered with tribal groups in the Great Lakes Region to create relationships and gardens that recognize their deep history and stewardship of the land.

Matthaei-Nichols offers opportunities: Matthaei-Nichols partners with many programs across the university and state, including Wolverine Pathways, the Summer Bridge Scholar Program, MSTEM Academies, and MI Math and Science Scholars that serve underrepresented and first-generation students. Additionally, Matthaei-Nichols is committed to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff that brings a range of perspectives, experiences, and skills to the stewardship and celebration of the natural world.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The University of Michigan is **one of the great public research universities** in the world. Since the nineteenth century it has served as a national model of a complex, diverse, and comprehensive public institution of higher learning that supports excellence in research, provides outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, and demonstrates commitment to public service and engagement. Michigan's nineteen schools and colleges, as well as its centers, institutes, museums, libraries, field stations, and gardens are nationally and internationally recognized. The university sustains top programs in the arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering, and in all of the major professional schools. It is the home of one of the largest academic medical centers in the world.

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The main campus is located in Ann Arbor, recognized as one of the finest and most vibrant college towns in the U.S., and has an enrollment of 48,000 students, about a third of whom are in graduate and professional studies. The university’s undergraduate students come from Michigan and from every other state in the union as well as more than a hundred countries.

As a public university, Michigan is dedicated to service in the larger world. Faculty research addresses a large range of critical issues—health care, robotics, the environment and sustainability, social interventions, education reform and improvement, poverty solutions, and many others. By extending fundamental understanding and advancing technological innovations, university scientists and engineers contribute to remarkable advances that are transforming life and contributing to building the economy of the state, region, and nation. University scholars in the humanities and the arts advance societal understanding around the most pressing and challenging problems facing the world today. Students are central to all of these activities and take part in faculty-led research, community-based service, and learning projects.

POSITION CONCEPT

The new director will catalyze and support collaboration, innovation, interdisciplinary research, and engaged learning in conjunction with faculty, staff, and organizational units across the University of Michigan in order to realize the fullest potential of Matthaei-Nichols. In addition, the director will enhance the enjoyment and utilization of Matthaei-Nichols while benefiting the public good through outreach and community engagement. The director will lead staff, stakeholders, and collaborators in shaping a strategic vision for the organization for the next decade and beyond. That vision and its implementation will address all aspects of the organization and the needs of the university including research, education, conservation, master planning, fiscal development, visitor engagement, and community outreach. The vision will also consider how Matthaei-Nichols can lead in UM's effort to reduce its carbon emissions and mitigate climate change. The director will be expected to build wide support and engagement across the university and community to achieve these outcomes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic planning. The director will work with faculty, staff, stakeholders, the provost’s office, and an advisory board to create and implement the organization’s next strategic plan, and will be charged with communicating the strategic goals of the plan to all stakeholders.

Resource stewardship. The director will oversee an organization with over 40 staff and many volunteers who support and maintain over 840 acres across two Matthaei-Nichols properties. As the primary administrator for Matthaei-Nichols, the director will ensure that Matthaei-Nichols operations comply with all university policies and procedures. The director will also manage annual and long-range budgets, financial plans, and reports as required and seek opportunities to grow and develop new revenue streams for Matthaei-Nichols. As the steward for the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, the director will preserve, maintain, and enhance these treasured properties for future generations to use and enjoy.

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Organizational leadership. The director will manage a strong, capable staff to achieve the organization's vision and goals; establish a positive organizational culture that supports and values high performance, inclusivity, transparency, open dialogue, collegiality, and professional development, and which strives to satisfy the needs of Matthaei-Nichols partners and stakeholders.

Fundraising and communications. The director, in collaboration with the Matthaei-Nichols development director, will develop and implement a development plan to raise financial support for the vision of the strategic plan. They will serve as the primary advocate and champion for Matthaei-Nichols. The director will also develop and maintain a strong and active advisory board and will seek board guidance for strategic direction as well as long-range planning, the development of major policies, and assistance in fundraising.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Our ideal candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal characteristics to this position:

- Five to ten years of organizational leadership and administrative experience in a botanical garden or related environment.
- A record of achievement as an academic or a professional with an advanced degree in a relevant discipline such as ecology, plant biology, environment, sustainability, horticulture, landscape architecture, public garden management, or related field.
- A professional record of scholarship or professional practice consistent with a tenure track, adjunct, or practical position in a school or college. (The candidate will have the opportunity for a joint appointment in an appropriate academic unit to pursue their scholarly interests.)
- A collaborative, collegial, transparent, and accessible leadership style and the demonstrated ability to work effectively across all levels of a large, complex organization.
- A demonstrated ability to lead, inspire, empower, and supervise staff and to successfully manage people, budgets, and other resources.
- A deep appreciation for and strong commitment to education, academic research, environmental stewardship, horticultural beauty, and public engagement.
- A strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to empowering and valuing the contributions of others.
- Experience in a research institution or similar organization and an understanding of research activities as an element of the core mission.
- Successful fundraising experience (or the interest in developing fundraising skills) and the ability to cultivate relationships with external individuals and organizations.

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- Excellent interpersonal, written communication, and public speaking skills and experience and the ability to communicate effectively with scientific and lay audiences.
- Experience engaging a broad range of individuals and constituencies.

CONTACT

Acceptance and review of applications will continue until the position is filled. Applicants should provide a *curriculum vitae* or professional resume and letter of application. All inquiries, nominations, and applications for this position will be treated confidentially. Naree Viner and Tenley Bank of Koya Leadership Partners have been exclusively retained for this search. To express your interest in this role please submit your materials [here](#) or email Tenley directly at tbank@koyapartners.com.

At Koya, we don't just accept difference – we celebrate it, support it, and thrive on it for the benefit of our team, our clients, and the communities we serve. Koya is an equal opportunity employer fully committed to creating an environment and team that represents a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, styles, and experiences.

The University of Michigan is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic university community committed to teaching and research in a multicultural environment. Potential applicants who share this goal are encouraged to apply.

ABOUT KOYA LEADERSHIP PARTNERS

Koya Leadership Partners, a member of the Diversified Search Group, is a leading executive search and strategic advising firm dedicated to connecting exceptionally talented people with mission-driven clients. Our founding philosophy—**The Right Person in the Right Place Can Change the World**—guides our work as we partner with nonprofits & NGOs, institutions of higher education, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

For more information about Koya Leadership Partners, visit www.koyapartners.com.