



## YERKES OBSERVATORY

- Job Title:** Assistant Director for Science / Director of Science  
(title dependent on experience)
- Reports to:** Executive Director
- Salary range:** \$150-180,000, plus benefits
- Status:** TBD - while we would strongly prefer to hire a full-time staff member, we are open to considering unique remote/on-site work arrangements that may flex seasonally, yearly, or change over time, as well as shared or joint appointments.

### YERKES FUTURE FOUNDATION and YERKES OBSERVATORY

This position offers a rare opportunity for the right candidate to impact the course of public engagement with science in the United States and make their mark on one of the iconic institutions in the history of astronomy.

Yerkes Observatory is known globally as the birthplace of modern astrophysics and remains the home to the world's largest refracting telescope. Since 1897, renowned astronomers and science luminaries who have walked the observatory's halls include Edwin Hubble, Otto Struve, Gerard Kuiper, Carl Sagan, NASA's first Chief of Astronomy Nancy Grace Roman, and Nobel prize-winners Albert Einstein and Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, among others.

Located in an elaborate Beaux-arts building situated on Geneva Lake in Wisconsin—roughly an hour each from metro Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison—the Observatory, which will be opened to the public for the first time in 2022, is within an hour's drive of a population of 11.3 million potential visitors. The site houses two modernized, roboticized telescopes along with the historic Yerkes Refractor, a glass-plate library holding 180,000 astronomical images, and classrooms, offices and outbuildings surrounded by 50 acres of grounds designed by the legendary landscape design firm Olmsted and Olmsted.

In 2020, the Yerkes Future Foundation assumed long-term stewardship from the University of Chicago for preserving and restoring the Observatory and its landscape. The Foundation is currently leading an initial \$20mm campaign to restore the Observatory and begin building a staff and program, with additional future fundraising planned for operations, endowment and program growth. A significant portion of that initial goal has already been raised, and restoration and major construction work on the site has been underway since mid-2020.

The goal of the Foundation is to transform the site into a pilgrimage site for science and discovery—an experience unlike any other where science, environment, arts and culture and curiosity cross-pollinate in novel and unique ways. From active astronomy research to outdoor science fiction film festivals, public talks by science luminaries and cultural influencers to school programs and overnight star parties—Yerkes will be a leading light in the United States for public understanding of, and engagement with, science for diverse audiences. Working in concert with the Executive Director and the Board, this new position leads the development, planning and execution of our most important and innovative science and programming initiatives.

## SEARCH SUMMARY

We are seeking an **Assistant Director for Science** or a **Director of Science** (henceforth, ADS/DOS). The final position title and leadership role within the Observatory will ultimately be dependent on the experience and background of the candidate hired.

This key leadership role at the Observatory will be responsible for advancing science and research at Yerkes in conjunction with partner institutions and astronomers, the oversight ongoing astronomy operations, and the development and delivery of science programming with colleagues at Yerkes.

The ADS/DOS will work on a daily basis with the Foundation’s Executive Director, Board, and funders. He/she is the public face of science to the community—and thus is a key part of the fundraising team, helping to open doors and cultivate donor and community relationships.

Given the start-up nature of the organization, the character of this position will shift over time from “doing” to truly “leading” as a growing team of staff and volunteers is built. The ideal candidate will be highly adaptable and come to Yerkes armed with experience in both “all-hands-on-deck” organizations, as well as within high-functioning, well-funded institutions that model best practices in education and/or public engagement. Resiliency will be a key attribute for success.

While we would strongly prefer to hire a full-time staff member, we are open to considering unique remote/on-site work arrangements that may flex annually, as well as shared or joint appointments. If your consideration of the role hinges on such unique arrangements it will not harm your prospects as a candidate... but please state so clearly in your cover letter.

## POSITION SUMMARY

**The ADS/DOS primarily devotes their time equally to three critical aspects of our mission.**

**First**, the ADS/DOS will be the public face and voice of science at Yerkes and will collaborate with the Director of External Affairs and the Director of Education to develop programs, events, exhibits and educational opportunities for our visitors that inspire wonder, grow science engagement and build interest in science and the world around us.

While our programs and events will frequently have astronomy and astrophysics at their core, we seek to connect visitors at all levels of knowledge with the sciences writ large and with the cultural expression of science and curiosity. This includes tapping into everything from our own astronomic research program to

space exploration, timely science stories in the news to science fiction, STEAM educational initiatives to art and culture—through inspiring and exciting experiences that connect visitors to the peerless legacy of exploration and discovery at the Observatory.

While some programs and events will be donor-supported, others will be expected to be revenue-generating components of the Observatory's business model. The ideal candidate for this position will be familiar and comfortable participating with a team in the development of both types of programs in the public sphere.

**Second**, the ADS/DOS is responsible for developing and executing the overall strategy for—and leading the management of—three telescopes at Yerkes along with affiliated resources. Two are recently upgraded roboticized reflectors (a 24" and a 40"), which are networked and connected to SkyNet for the sharing of research time with peer observatories. The third is the historic Yerkes Refractor. The telescopes and astronomy operations of Yerkes are central to the Observatory's legacy, identity, and reputation—and will remain central to its future.

While aspects of the management and day-to-day operations of the telescopes may be assigned to an astronomer or telescope manager who is brought on staff in future, the ADS/DOS will be required to have (or very quickly develop with the help of contractors and a blue-ribbon telescope committee) a nuanced and thorough understanding of the equipment's potentials and limitations to advance our mission. He/she will be expected to handle day-to-day management of astronomy operations until such time as a position responsible for those duties is added to our staff.

Additionally, the ADS/DOS will be responsible for the care and use of a collection of 180,000 glass plate images of the cosmos, taken over 125 years, that are owned by the University of Chicago but are stored onsite and administered by the Yerkes Future Foundation.

**Third**, the ADS/DOS will lead and develop high-level, high-functioning partnerships with universities, other observatories, planetariums and public institutions to further our mission. Examples of such future partners might include the Chicago Humanities Festival, Newberry Library, UW astronomy department and/or Space Place, local colleges and technical schools, or the Adler and MPM Planetariums (to name but a few). Thus the ADS/DOS needs to have the appropriate level of experience, reputation and/or credentials to hold credible sway with potential partner organizations... along with the ability to think strategically and negotiate successfully with such organizations.

## **JOB DUTIES**

- Provide leadership presence as the public face of science at Yerkes, both onsite and in the media.
- Oversee the strategy for—and day-to-day operations of—the Observatory's telescope, research and astronomy operations.
- Working with the Director of External Affairs and Director of Education, develop a slate of holistic, class-leading programs, exhibits and activities that make science and astronomy engaging and surprising for people of varied backgrounds, meeting them where they are.
- Working with colleagues, ensure the program mix contains a balance of mission-driven and revenue-driven programs and events.
- Be an active part of the leadership team's cultivation and stewardship of donor and community relationships.
- Build a team of talented staff and volunteers that complement his/her areas of expertise.

- Hire/train/supervise the staff needed to successfully deliver our mission.
- Maintain a healthy balance between programs and partnerships targeting tourists and seasonal residents and those targeting and serving local communities.
- Collaborate with the Director of External Affairs to ensure the Observatory's programming is sufficiently varied for our visitor segmentation and business goals, and high-quality enough to garner respect in the scientific community as well as market-leading online reviews.
- Establish and sustain beneficial regional and national partnerships, prioritizing Chicago-based organizations that elevate the Observatory's science reputation and program.
- With the Director of External Affairs, build a diverse corps of like-minded volunteers, part-timers, and staff as resources allow—forging relationships with the educators, astronomers, academics and science geeks the Observatory needs in our corner to succeed.
- Ensure Observatory programming and partnerships prioritize engaging under-represented groups in the sciences, including people of color and women.
- Establish and manage budgets and models, and accurately project revenue and expenses.
- Develop and write grant proposals, research proposals, MOU's and other documents as needed to advance Observatory goals.
- Monitor and evaluate programs for science quality and standards, using feedback and data to constantly improve Observatory offerings.
- Ensure the smooth management and operation of the Observatory's telescopes.
- Represent the Observatory to and at professional associations and events.
- Ensure a beneficial and positive ongoing relationship with the University of Chicago Astronomy Department.
- Other duties as required.

#### Requirements:

- An advanced degree in astronomy, science or a field related to the role, or equivalent experience.
- Prior leadership experience in an organization that translates to the challenges and opportunities at hand.
- A demonstrable history of—or interest in—leading the creation of a culturally-engaged suite of science programs and educational opportunities for the public.
- Ability to explain complex science and technical topics to the lay public in a compelling and engaging way, and significant experience as a public speaker.
- A network of high-level professional contacts in astronomy, space exploration, and the sciences broadly.
- Able to make and sustain personal connections with the local community, donors, and national and international peers.
- Ability to be on-site in Williams Bay, WI as required.
- Creative, adaptable, personable.
- Able to lead with emotional intelligence and able to motivate others to action.

#### Preferred:

- A PhD in astronomy or equivalent experience, or a terminal degree in another field of science or science education.
- Research experience at the university, governmental or NGO level.
- Experience with grants and public funding streams for science.
- Significant experience in an institution with a focus on public engagement in the sciences.

- Contemporary experience with the technology and operations of an observatory.
- Prior teaching experience (formal or informal).
- Familiarity with STEAM education and other contemporary curricular models.
- Knowledge of the history of science, and/or astronomy particularly.