THE SEARCH

Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine is seeking a visionary and collaborative leader to serve as the Head for the Department of Genetics, a world-renowned, historic department where the study of genetics originated. Reporting to the Dean of the School of Medicine and a member of the Executive Faculty, the Head is a key member of leadership in the biomedical sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine (WUSM).

The Department of Genetics is at the forefront of the rapidly developing field of genomic medicine. The evolution of sequencing technologies, genome engineering, automated cellular imaging, and mass spectrometry methods to rapidly perform proteomic and metabolomics studies, coupled with powerful computational tools, is revolutionizing the biological sciences. Investigators in the department are developing new methods of genomic analysis — including technology and software, epigenomics and copy number variation as well as studies of disease pathways using model organisms — to identify and study the genes responsible for human disease and treatment responses.

The Head will have the opportunity to increase collaboration across basic science and clinical departments; develop an ambitious faculty recruitment plan, particularly those with human genetics and computational or bioinformatic expertise; embed the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion across all department activities; build an engaged sense of community around a centralized location; and establish a plan to balance research foci within the department. The Head will have a dedication to graduate school education and development and a commitment to mentorship.

Washington University in St. Louis has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Head of the Department of Genetics. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Founded in 1891, WUSM embraces the traditional missions of teaching, research, and clinical care and has, in recent years, taken increasing responsibility for community engagement, assuring healthcare service across the entire population of the metropolitan region, including people who are historically underserved. WUSM enrolls approximately 1,400 students and offers nationally recognized master’s and doctoral degree programs in medicine, biomedical research, allied health professions, and clinical and population research. Washington University also operates the nation’s largest MD/PhD program, dedicated to educating the next generation of physician-scientists.

The Medical School’s campus spans 164 acres, consisting of 12 blocks, in the Central West End region of St. Louis. The Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis Children’s Hospital, and The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis, the School’s affiliated teaching hospitals, are physically linked to the School by an enclosed pedestrian bridge system. The School owns approximately five million square feet of space supporting all of its missions and spends an average of $60 million a year on renovations and new construction.

As WUSM engages more fully with the community around it and appeals more broadly to student talent, it has adopted a clearer priority to diversify its own ranks. To move its goals from intention to fruition, the School is taking deliberate, far-reaching action to build a framework for meaningful change. Current efforts are underway to address factors including race, color, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, disability, religion, and socioeconomic background. The percentages of women and underrepresented minority faculty have increased in the last decade. Women now make up 38% of the faculty. The number of underrepresented minority faculty has grown steadily but is still only 7.22% of the total and is an area of great focus for the School. African American, Hispanic, and Native American students now comprise 39% of the Medical School student body and 13% of the PhD student body.

School of Medicine faculty frequently collaborate with their colleagues on the Danforth Campus, the academic home to the majority of the university’s undergraduate and non-biomedical graduate and professional students. WUSM has an enduring, tested, and mature affiliation with BJC Healthcare, a system of hospitals. Over the past 20+ years, BJC Healthcare has grown into one of the largest nonprofit healthcare organizations in the United States with 15 hospitals, including Barnes-Jewish Hospital and St. Louis Children’s Hospital, which are both consistently ranked as leading hospitals by U.S. News and World Report. BJC Healthcare is the largest provider of charity care and community benefit in Missouri. It is the largest employer in Missouri, with the School of Medicine not far behind. BJC Healthcare and WUSM have worked together to systematically, consistently, and generously fund science and research with great success.

Under the leadership of Dean David Perlmutter, WUSM is setting ambitious priorities and making critical investments in personalized medicine and aging, among other areas. To support these endeavors, the School has recently begun a 10-year plan to invest $2.3 billion to support

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innovation in research, education, and patient care. One example of these investments is the $100 million BJC Investigators Program, a joint effort between BJC and Washington University to keep the school’s biomedical research at the forefront of discovery. The program is designed to specifically focus on basic science and is inspired by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s philosophy of investing in people with exceptional creative talent. These BJC Investigators are awarded $1 million a year for a period of ten years. WUSM has thus far recruited seven of the envisioned ten renowned preclinical researchers to join and enhance the life sciences ecosystem of St. Louis.

Finance and Governance

The Medical School has an annual budget of $3.35 billion. WUSM has a dedicated endowment of $2.7 billion, which is invested as part of the University’s endowment.

At WUSM, both clinical and preclinical success has long been driven by strong department heads. The School enshrined its commitment to department heads in its by-laws, which are subject to approval by the Trustees of the University. The by-laws provide for two bodies; a Faculty Council, with its own Executive Committee, provides a forum for discussion of school-wide issues and representation to a second body, the WUSM Executive Faculty. The Executive Faculty is a committee composed of the 21 department heads, two delegates from the faculty selected by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council, and one additional faculty member from the voluntary clinical faculty. The Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean chairs the Executive Faculty and sets its agenda. Because of this unique model, heads are unusually powerful, not only within their own departments, but also within the School as a whole.

WUSM DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

The WUSM Department of Genetics offers a broad range of exceptional preclinical and graduate instruction, with research opportunities in genome science, computational biology, and statistical genetics as well as model organism, evolutionary, and human genetics. More recently, the faculty have focused on neurological disorders, cellular bioenergetics, epigenomics, personalized medicine, and genome technology development. The mission of the Department is to create an exciting and collegial environment where world-class research in genetics and genomics is translated into improvements in human health. Given its mission, the Department serves as a consortium of faculty, administrators, students, and community stakeholders committed to identifying and studying the genes responsible for human disease and treatment responses. With a broad range of courses and seminars, the department is tailored to meet the needs of medical students, graduate students, and both MD and PhD postdoctoral fellows pursuing advanced training in biomedical research. The Department of Genetics has a plethora of mentoring and development programs available that contribute to its high educational ranking. The 2022 U.S. News & World Report currently ranks the Department in the Top 5 genetics/genomics/bioinformatics programs in the country.

By promoting personalized medicine through genomic technologies and computational tools, the Department is consistently at the forefront of genetics research. The Department is broadly
interdisciplinary in nature, with strengths stemming from genomics, computational biology, epigenetics, statistical genetics, and model organisms, among others. It provides an interdisciplinary approach to research and education, collaborating closely with both the MGI Genome Technology Access Center and the MGI Genome Engineering and Stem Cell Center, alongside other departments across the School of Medicine.

In 2015, the Debra and George W. Couch III Biomedical Research Building became the home of the Department of Genetics. The state-of-the-art research facility features highly flexible open laboratories to facilitate collaboration and accommodate new research teams. With six stories and 138,000 square feet of lab space, it houses researchers involved in genetics, genomics, and regenerative biology, and it consolidates most Department of Genetics faculty into a single location closer to important collaborators from other departments.

The Department houses 15 labs and 33 faculty members, 8 FT staff, and 3 adjunct professors. Capitalizing on the strength of interdisciplinary partnerships at WUSM, the Department also contains 33 affiliated faculty members.

Stable financial health is a direct result of the commitment of Department leadership to thoughtful stewardship of resources. The department has $24 million in research expenditures, with the largest portfolios coming from the NIH. There are five endowed professorships in the department; two that are department-owned, two that are owned by the School of Medicine, and the department chair. The Department’s general cash reserve is $14 million, the market value of the permanent endowment was $14.5 million, and the quasi endowment was $14.5 million in June 2022.

ROLE OF THE HEAD

The Head of the WUSM Department of Genetics is the leader of the Department, with responsibility for empowering the educational and research mission as well as overseeing administrative and financial operations for the Department. The Head will have a strong expertise in genetics, their own well-known and admired lab, and exquisite taste in science. Maintaining collaboration efforts within department labs will be essential, and the Head should have a desire to work across the Department, building a sense of community and faculty engagement.

As the leader of the Department of Genetics, the Head has a key responsibility to support and enhance the Department’s workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Head will have a proven track record of nurturing a culture that embeds diversity values within the entire Department. This duty will include bolstering efforts in intentional recruitment that celebrates diversity and seeks underrepresented talent. The Head will have a proven track record of leading units that prize equity and inclusion as equal to scientific excellence.
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In order to continue driving the Department forward, the next Head of the WUSM Department of Genetics must address the following key challenges and opportunities:

**Strengthen recruitment efforts to extensively grow the Department faculty**

The Head of the WUSM Department of Genetics will be tasked with growing Department faculty. By analyzing previous recruiting methodologies, the Head will oversee the development of new strategies relating to pathway programs, initial offers, and retention plans. To continue to lead the forefront of genetics research, the Department wants to emphasize dual-focused recruitments of human genetics and wet-lab biology, with computational biology or bioinformatics skillsets. At all times, the Head will be focused on recruiting faculty with outstanding scientific track records and promise. The Head will continue to properly balance the Department’s efforts between human genetics with model organism genetics and bring their own vision for the future.

Representation matters, and WUSM has made a commitment to diversify faculty and develop inclusive communities. Right now, the Department faculty is comprised of 26% women and 3% persons of color. The Head’s strategic efforts to recruit and retain faculty will highlight the development of an equitable and inclusive department culture that celebrates diversity in the sciences in its many forms, including historically marginalized communities, gender diversity, and geographic location, among others. The Head will specifically target recruitments to broaden representation in applicant pools and faculty hires.

**Collaborate and develop relationships with other departments, institutes, and centers**

It will be crucial to enhance the Department’s ability to collaborate across all departments. An increased focus in precision medicine will rely on genetic research partners, so it will be essential for the Head to increase collaborative efforts with clinical areas such as cancer, pediatrics, and neurology. The Department is dedicated to revolutionizing the biological sciences through sequencing technologies, genome engineering, automated cellular imaging, and mass spectrometry methods to rapidly perform proteomic and metabolomics studies, coupled with powerful computational tools. To maximize these techniques for investigators within the department, the Head must increase collaboration with STEM departments such as the Applied Math, Computer Science, and Engineering departments.

The new Department Head will also work collaboratively with the McDonnell Genome Institute (MGI). MGI has evolved into an institute that serves as a technology hub for personalized medicine focused on tech development, runs a series of core services for faculty across the university and provides contract services to big pharma. It is not an academic department and does not serve as a home for faculty. The Department of Genetics has worked very closely with MGI and in the future it should be able to fully utilize MGI as a partner for preclinical and graduate instruction in genetics, as well as Department research opportunities that include studies of
transcriptional networks, population genetics, protein evolution, neurological disorders, developmental genetics, models of human disease, genome architecture, statistical genetics and computational biology, genome technologies and infertility

Advance and facilitate careers of individuals within the department through a unified mission and sense of community

The Head will ensure faculty and trainees have resources to aid them in the development of their own scientific careers. By assisting with transparency and uniformity, the Head will be responsible for clearly articulating and aligning the needs of faculty. The Head will also be highly engaged with junior faculty, encouraging participation in department events and opportunities. The Department is home to a culture of cross-lab collaboration, and that should extend into a culture of mentorship between senior and junior faculty. The Head must use leadership skills to embody these values and foster success across the Department.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

As a critical voice in the sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine, the Head must be able to establish credibility with the faculty at WUSM and within the field broadly. The ideal candidate will be an outstanding scientist and scholar with demonstrated leadership and administrative ability who will have intellectual stature, record, and vision to integrate and inspire the research community. A strong dedication and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as a vision for the future of scientific training, is essential. In addition, the candidate must meet requirements for appointment as full professor. Successful candidates for this position will possess many, if not all, of the following characteristics:

• An MD, MD/PhD, or equivalent required
• An excellent scientist with experience running a successful and highly regarded lab; a distinguished research portfolio
• Proven financial and administrative experience commensurate to running a complex division that expects excellence across the Department of Genetics
• A demonstrated commitment to the graduate student experience
• A resolute commitment to academic excellence in recruiting and developing faculty and supporting exceptional education and research
• Commitment to the culture of equity, inclusivity, and diversity at Washington University in St. Louis; demonstrated success in advancing inclusiveness and diversity, particularly with respect to hiring and retaining faculty
• A collaborative and communicative leadership style, outstanding interpersonal skills, integrity, warmth, good humor, and a high level of energy
TO APPLY

Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist the Head, Department of Genetics Search Committee in its identification and review of candidates. Nominations, applications, and inquiries should be submitted online:

https://www.imsearch.com/search-detail/8637
Ariannah Mirick, Partner
Joanna Cook, Managing Associate
Ibaad Nazeer, Associate
Isaacson, Miller

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