



Search for the Director of the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

THE SEARCH

The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) seek an accomplished and inspirational leader in cancer care to become the next Director of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center (HCC), an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center. HCC forms one of the largest academic and clinical partnerships in cancer care and research in the United States. UPMC is a world-renowned health care provider and insurer, consistently ranked among the top healthcare institutions globally. HCC serves as a hub for advanced cancer treatment, pioneering research, and comprehensive patient care, offering cutting-edge therapies and clinical trials to patients throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

As a part of the University of Pittsburgh, a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and one of the nation's top research institutions, HCC plays a key role in both the academic and clinical missions of the university and medical center. The center has been an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center since 1990, recognizing its exceptional strength in basic, clinical, and translational research, as well as its leadership in cancer prevention and control. Members of the Cancer Center collaborate across multiple disciplines, drawing on the expertise of faculty from numerous departments, including the School of Medicine, the School of Public Health, and the School of Pharmacy, among others.

The new Director will provide strategic leadership to advance the Center's mission of reducing the burden of cancer through exceptional patient care, research breakthroughs, and educational initiatives. The ideal candidate will be a forward-thinking and collaborative physician-scientist with a deep understanding of the evolving cancer care and research landscape. They must be skilled in managing multidisciplinary teams and developing innovative research and clinical programs. The Director must not only be an outstanding researcher but be well equipped to promote research, with exquisite visionary knowledge in science.

The successful candidate should be internationally recognized in an oncology-related field along with demonstrated leadership experience in complex, matrixed academic healthcare environments. They must also demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and foster strong relationships with faculty, staff, students, and the broader community.

The University of Pittsburgh has retained Isaacson, Miller - a national executive search firm - to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Founded in 1787, the University of Pittsburgh is one of the oldest higher education institutions in the United States and a leader in public research. With an R1 designation and membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU), Pitt excels across 16 schools and colleges, offering over 300 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. The university enrolls more than 28,000 students, who benefit from its strong academic offerings and robust research environment. Pitt consistently ranks among the top public universities for its research output and academic programs.

Pitt's reputation as a global research powerhouse is reflected in its contributions to science, technology, and health. The university maintains strong interdisciplinary research programs and deep community engagement, preparing students and faculty to be innovators and problem-solvers on both national and global levels. Strategic partnerships, particularly with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), further enhance Pitt's standing as a leader in both academic research and practical application in fields such as medical research, healthcare delivery, and public health.

Health Sciences at Pitt

The University of Pittsburgh's six schools of the health sciences—Dental Medicine, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health—are among the nation's best, known for both their research and educational missions. With a legacy that includes the development of the first effective polio vaccine and groundbreaking work in organ transplantation, neuroscience, immunology, and cancer treatment, Pitt's health sciences programs have consistently advanced the frontiers of medical knowledge and patient care.

The health sciences at Pitt have seen significant growth over the past two decades. In fiscal year 2023, Pitt ranked among the top institutions in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding, with its health sciences schools accounting for the majority of these funds. In 2023 alone, Pitt received nearly \$700 million in NIH funding, with the School of Medicine receiving the largest share. All six health sciences schools rank in the top 15 nationally (according to *U.S. News & World Report*), a testament to their research productivity and academic strength. The School of Medicine employs over 2,700 full-time faculty and is ranked among the top six schools of medicine in terms of NIH funding.

Pitt's partner academic medical center, UPMC, was founded as the university's academic medical center and remains operationally integrated with Pitt's medical school. UPMC has grown into the nation's largest academic health center, encompassing 40 hospitals, over 700 outpatient sites, and more than 6,600 total physicians. This partnership allows Pitt to offer unparalleled clinical training and research opportunities, making it a leader in medical education and healthcare innovation.

The heart of Pitt's academic health system is located in Pittsburgh's Oakland, Shadyside, and Lawrenceville neighborhoods, where teaching hospitals like UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside, UPMC Magee-Women's Hospital, and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh are interwoven with Pitt's health sciences facilities. This integration supports a vibrant ecosystem of clinical care, research, and education, making Pitt and UPMC essential players in both regional and global healthcare.

University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Leadership

Dr. **Anantha Shekhar** is the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences and the John and Gertrude Petersen Dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. He has played a key role in advancing Pitt's medical research, helping the university maintain a top position in NIH funding. His leadership focuses on fostering multidisciplinary research, interdisciplinary education, and expanding the university's translational research programs, bringing together scientists and clinicians to address key health challenges.

Before joining Pitt, Shekhar held several leadership roles at Indiana University, including Director of the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute. He is recognized for his work in psychiatry and neuroscience, particularly in developing novel treatments for schizophrenia, mood and anxiety disorders, and basic neurobiology discoveries. Shekhar earned his medical degree from St. John's Medical College in India and a PhD in neuroscience from Indiana University.

UPMC

UPMC, headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is one of the largest and most respected nonprofit healthcare providers in the United States. Founded in 1893 with the establishment of Presbyterian Hospital, UPMC has evolved into a vast integrated health system. With over 40 hospitals, 800 outpatient sites, and a workforce exceeding 100,000 employees, UPMC delivers specialized care across a variety of fields including cancer treatment, transplantation, neurosurgery, psychiatry, and rehabilitation. This tremendous growth has transformed UPMC into a healthcare powerhouse that not only serves the western Pennsylvania region but also extends its reach globally.

UPMC's success is closely linked to its strong partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, particularly the Schools of Health Sciences. This collaboration has allowed UPMC to integrate research, education, and clinical care seamlessly, leading to numerous breakthroughs in fields such as oncology, cardiology, and organ transplantation. This ongoing commitment to innovation has solidified UPMC's reputation as a global leader in advancing healthcare.

A key factor in UPMC's ability to provide high-quality care is its exceptional team of physicians. UPMC employs more than 6,600 affiliated doctors, including over 5,000 directly employed by the system. UPMC also partners with community-based physician groups, enhancing its ability to provide localized, patient-centered care while leveraging the resources of a world-renowned academic medical center. These partnerships ensure that patients throughout UPMC's extensive network receive specialized care close to home.

In addition to its clinical services, UPMC Health Plan, the system's insurance division, is a vital part of UPMC's integrated model of care. Serving more than 4 million members, UPMC Health Plan offers innovative, cost-effective insurance products that meet the needs of diverse populations, from individual members to those enrolled in government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. This integration between insurance and care delivery allows UPMC to provide coordinated, high-quality services at lower costs, benefiting both patients and providers.

Finally, UPMC's influence extends internationally. UPMC owns and operates hospitals, cancer centers and other healthcare services in Italy, Ireland, and Croatia. This international expansion reflects UPMC's commitment to advancing healthcare on a global scale, positioning it as a leader in both academic and clinical medicine, while also continuing to innovate and meet the challenges of tomorrow.

UPMC Leadership

Leslie C. Davis is the President and CEO of UPMC. With over 30 years of healthcare experience, she has been a key figure in driving UPMC's growth and innovation. Prior to becoming CEO, Davis served as President of UPMC's Health Services Division, where she managed the operations of UPMC's 40-hospital system across Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland. Under her leadership, UPMC has continued to expand its influence, including significant investments in new healthcare facilities and partnerships, such as the 2023 opening of UPMC Mercy Pavilion and the 2024 signing of a merger agreement with the Washington Health System.

Davis has also been instrumental in UPMC's sustainability initiatives, including signing the White House Climate Pledge and making moves to reduce UPMC's environmental impact by eliminating the use of certain harmful anesthetics. She is recognized not only for her leadership within UPMC but also as one of the most influential people in healthcare in 2023, thanks to her efforts in driving UPMC's mission of providing accessible, high-quality care while spearheading innovations that benefit the broader healthcare industry.

Before joining UPMC, Davis held leadership roles at notable institutions such as Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York and the University of Pennsylvania Health System, bringing a wealth of experience to her current role. Her leadership continues to guide UPMC's strategic growth and focus on delivering life-changing medicine.

UPMC HILLMAN CANCER CENTER (HCC)

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center is a premier institution recognized for its leadership in cancer research, treatment, and education. As an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, HCC integrates scientific discovery with clinical excellence, providing exceptional care while advancing the understanding, prevention, and treatment of cancer. Founded in 1985, HCC has grown into one of the largest cancer care networks in the U.S., serving patients across more than 75 locations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Maryland, and internationally. Its matrixed structure combines seven major research programs, cutting-edge clinical trials, and extensive community outreach efforts, making it a leader in the fight against cancer.

Hillman's research strength is reflected in its \$109 million in total direct funding, with \$44 million from the NCI, representing a 42% increase over five years. The center is home to three NCI Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs) in melanoma, head and neck, and ovarian cancers. Its 344 members are involved in groundbreaking research, having published over 850 articles in the past year, with 29% appearing in high-impact journals. HCC's clinical research is equally robust, with over 2,200 patients enrolled in interventional trials annually, 905 of whom are in treatment trials.

In its 2020 NCI renewal, HCC received an "exceptional" impact score, a testament to its comprehensive approach and its commitment to advancing both research and patient care. This renewal also included promises of expansion in research space and funding, leading to the development of a strategic plan aimed at building on existing strengths and exploring new areas of importance. This plan emphasizes six cross-cutting themes to ensure that HCC remains at the forefront of cancer research for years to come:

- Social & Environmental Influences
- Cancer Across the Lifespan/Survivorship
- Tumor Immunity & Microenvironment
- Eliminate Cancer Health Disparities
- Precision Oncology & Integrative Biology
- Data Science & Analytics

Community outreach is a critical part of HCC's mission. The center has been recognized for initiatives such as its tele CARES program, which addresses mental health challenges like depression and anxiety in cancer patients across its network. HCC's response to public health emergencies, such as the 2023 East Palestine, Ohio train derailment, further underscores its commitment to the well-being of the communities it serves. Additionally, the center's efforts in prevention and early detection have resulted in \$1.4 billion in healthcare cost avoidance statewide.

With continued support from UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh, HCC is well positioned for future growth. Its economic impact on Pennsylvania is substantial, generating nearly \$4 billion annually for the Commonwealth of PA, supporting over 17,000 jobs, and contributing over \$263 million in tax revenue. These economic benefits, combined with HCC's clinical, research, and educational achievements, make it a critical driver of both healthcare innovation and regional prosperity.

THE ROLE

The Cancer Center Director oversees all research, education, clinical trials, and other academic activities. The Director will play a pivotal role in advancing the center's mission of integrating scientific discovery with clinical practice to improve cancer outcomes. The Director will have primary responsibility for maintaining the HCC Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG), as well as ensuring the continued success of HCC's numerous programs, including its three NCI-designated SPOREs and its vast clinical trials portfolio. UPMC Hillman Cancer Center is a matrixed organization within the university and a large health care

system. The UPMC Hillman Cancer Center clinical service line is overseen by the Chairman and Chief Medical Officer of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and the president of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center.

The next Director is expected to further broaden the academic impact of HCC by creating programs of translational excellence for the most common cancer subtypes, such as lung, breast, GI, GU, and blood by leveraging the extensive discovery research programs, nearly 250,000 sq. ft. of dedicated laboratory space, a new oncobiology PhD program, an advanced cell and vector manufacturing partnership, and numerous clinical fellowships. The exact administrative structure that could facilitate accomplishing these goals is being developed by the Dean and UPMC Cancer Service line leadership and will be an important opportunity for the next Director to lead.

Reporting jointly to the Dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and the President of UPMC, the Director will collaborate with leaders across the UPMC health system and the University of Pittsburgh. This role requires working closely with the leadership of Pitt's six health sciences schools, UPMC's 40-hospital network, and other academic and clinical collaborators. The Director will be expected to build on the center's existing strengths while forging new partnerships to enhance HCC's position as a global leader in cancer research, education, and patient care. This position requires a proven scientific leader who can inspire and align a diverse community of stakeholders to achieve shared goals.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To successfully lead HCC, the new Director will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Ensure leadership for the NCI Cancer Center Support Grant and prepare for the 2027 renewal

The new Director will be responsible for overseeing HCC's core NCI CCSG, which is critical to maintaining its status as a Comprehensive Cancer Center. The Cancer Center was previously awarded a two-year merit extension due to an exceptional rating. The Director will oversee the ongoing operations funded by the grant while leading the preparation for a competitive renewal in 2027. The Director will be responsible for ensuring that all scientific programs, shared resources, and community outreach efforts are performing at a high level, with clear metrics and documentation in place to support the strongest submission. This effort will require close coordination with research teams, administrative staff, and external advisors.

Expand the center's research portfolio with bold, strategic initiatives

The Director will need to be proactive and strategic in continuing to build out HCC's research portfolio, identifying new areas of opportunity that align with the center's strengths and national priorities. This could include pursuing additional NCI SPORE grants in areas such as immunotherapy, precision medicine, or other emerging fields in oncology. The Director will also be tasked with fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between basic, clinical, and population scientists, ensuring that the research produced by HCC is innovative and impactful. This growth will require securing new funding sources, expanding partnerships, and aligning research goals with the needs of HCC's diverse catchment area. The Director

will also need to leverage resources and leadership internally to properly support these new research endeavors administratively.

Foster collaboration across HCC, Pitt, and UPMC

With a large and diverse group of stakeholders, the new Director must work to ensure cohesive and collaborative relationships across HCC, the University of Pittsburgh, UPMC, and the physicians who work across these organizations. This will require clear communication, regular engagement, and transparent goal setting to align the priorities of faculty, researchers, and clinical staff. The Director must foster an environment where all members, regardless of their role or affiliation, feel supported and integral to HCC's mission. This will involve balancing the interests of academic research, clinical practice, and community outreach, ensuring that all partners are aligned with the cancer center's overarching goals.

Leverage HCC's network of over 75 cancer locations for maximum impact

HCC's extensive network of over 75 cancer treatment locations provides a unique opportunity for the new Director to create synergies between the academic faculty and the full-time clinical oncologists across the region. Strengthening these links will help HCC maximize its impact across its large geographic catchment area.

Collaborate with physicians to enhance clinical and translational research

A key part of the new Director's role will be engaging the physicians working within the HCC network to support cutting-edge research as well as provide access to high-quality clinical trials.

Secure new philanthropic investments to support Hillman's mission

As HCC continues to grow, securing philanthropic support will be critical to funding new initiatives, expanding research, and ensuring long-term sustainability. The Director will be an active advocate for HCC, building relationships with individual donors, foundations, and other funding sources to secure the resources necessary to drive innovation. This will involve articulating a clear and compelling vision for the cancer center's future, identifying high-impact funding opportunities, and demonstrating how donor contributions can directly advance cancer research and patient care. Successful fundraising efforts will be key to maintaining HCC's position as a global leader in oncology.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Required qualifications are:

- MD or MD/PhD with a track record of accomplishments in cancer research and a deep understanding of basic, translational, clinical, and population-based science.
- Progressive administrative leadership experience in an academic medical center environment.
- National recognition for achievement in clinical, educational, and/or research pursuits that would warrant a tenured appointment at the level of full professor.

- Record of accomplishment for developing research infrastructure and extramural funding, as well as generating innovative and cutting-edge research
- Excellent strategic skills, administrative experience, and financial acumen.
- Proven experience in managing or contributing to the renewal of an NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) and deep knowledge of NCI grant expectations and processes.
- Demonstrated experience promoting an inclusive culture in the workforce and academic environment.
- Excellent communication skills and demonstrated interpersonal skills, allowing for transparency, respect, effective problem resolution, and ethical decision-making.

Desirable qualifications include:

- Previous leadership experience overseeing or expanding a high-functioning, multidisciplinary cancer center within an academic medical center or comparable complex environment.
- Strategic thinker with the ability to innovate in a rapidly evolving healthcare environment, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability to market and research trends.
- A strong advocate for cancer center objectives who can navigate the complexities of a large academic medical center, securing necessary support from internal and external stakeholders.
- A collaborative and approachable leadership style that fosters consensus-building, teamwork, and cross-functional cooperation among researchers, clinicians, and administrators.
- Experience in building relationships with philanthropic organizations and donors to secure funding for education, research, and clinical initiatives.
- A leadership style that is both empathetic and empowering, holding team members accountable while prioritizing the needs and success of the center's faculty, staff, and trainees.
- Ability to engage and inspire the broader community, including faculty, donors, patients, and external partners, to support and enhance the center's mission.

Please follow these links for more information about the [University of Pittsburgh](#), [UPMC](#), or [UPMC Hillman Cancer Center](#).

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and letters of interest responding to the requirements outlined in the position profile) should be submitted via Isaacson, Miller's website:

Ariannah Mirick, Managing Partner
Nicholas Strand, Managing Associate
Samuel Ruth, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-pittsburgh-school-medicine/hillman-cancer-center-director

Electronic submission of the application is required.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from sex discrimination in educational programs and activities at institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Questions regarding Title IX may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator, at titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu or to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 8th Floor, Five Post Office Square, Boston MA 02109-3921. Telephone: 617.289.0111, Fax: 617.289.0150, TDD: 800.877.8339, or Email: ocr.boston@ed.gov The University of Pittsburgh is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer and values equality of opportunity, human dignity and diversity, EOE, including disability/vets.