



Search for the Division Chief for Clinical Research and Endowed Chair
Pennington Biomedical Research Center
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

THE OPPORTUNITY

Pennington Biomedical Research Center, a world-renowned academic research institute, seeks an innovative and accomplished physician-scientist to serve as the Division Chief for Clinical Research and Endowed Chair. A key member of the executive leadership team, the Division Chief will play an instrumental role in advancing Pennington Biomedical's mission to discover the triggers of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia through comprehensive basic, clinical, and population research. This senior leadership opportunity provides the platform to influence global health outcomes while working alongside world-class scientists in state-of-the-art facilities, with a special commitment to translating groundbreaking discoveries into effective treatments that improve human health throughout the lifespan.

Based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Pennington Biomedical Research Center has established itself over three decades as a premier, globally recognized research institution focused on chronic disease, nutrition, and metabolic health. The Division Chief for Clinical Research and Endowed Chair will drive the Center's innovative clinical research programs by mentoring and inspiring early-career scientists, navigating the evolving funding landscape, championing collaborative ventures, and supporting diverse funding strategies that spark innovation. The Division Chief's leadership will propel Pennington's internationally acclaimed programs that are tackling today's most pressing health challenges—obesity, diabetes, aging, and cancer—while making a lasting impact on the future of human health.

Reporting to the Executive Director, Dr. John Kirwan, the successful candidate will be board-certified in internal medicine and/or subspecialties such as endocrinology, gerontology, cardiology, oncology, or neurology. They will bring clinical expertise and a robust administrative vision to help shape strategic direction and research priorities. They must also have an extensive track record of securing grant funding and a substantial publication record, underscoring a commitment to advancing scientific knowledge and qualifying them for a faculty rank of full professor with tenure.

Pennington Biomedical Research Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

PENNINGTON BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER

Pennington Biomedical Research Center is a public-private partnership that has become a global leader in nutrition research and metabolic health over the past three decades. Located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Center's mission is to discover the triggers of chronic diseases through innovative research that improves human health across the lifespan.

At the forefront of medical discovery as it relates to understanding the causes of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia, Pennington Biomedical is affiliated with Louisiana State University and conducts basic, clinical, and population research. As a state entity, Pennington Biomedical has a particular focus and commitment to helping Louisiana's residents live longer and healthier lives.

Research

Over the last 30 years, Pennington Biomedical's world-renowned scientists have made remarkable discoveries that have improved how Americans exercise, eat, and age and greatly advanced society's understanding of obesity, diabetes, dementia, and other chronic diseases. Researchers have contributed to nearly every obesity and diabetes drug on the market, developed obesity and lifestyle interventions, and are a leading provider of nutrition science for the U.S. military.

The Center's 550 employees perform research activities across 752,000 square feet of state-of-the-art laboratories, clinics, conference spaces, and offices located on a tranquil 222-acre urban campus in Baton Rouge. The Center's research enterprise includes approximately 65 scientists and more than 20 postdoctoral fellows who comprise a network of [44 laboratories](#) supported by lab techs, nurses, dietitians, support personnel, and [13 highly specialized core service facilities](#). Research at Pennington covers ten areas: obesity, diabetes, epidemiology & prevention, genomics & molecular genetics, neurobiology, neurodegeneration, nutrient sensing & signaling, cancer, physical activity & health, and developmental biology.

Centers & Institutes

Pennington Biomedical is proud to be home to [several NIH-funded research centers and other state and federally funded partnerships](#). Supported by center grants, these prestigious designations are awarded to institutions with groups of established investigators working in areas of scientific emphasis as defined by the National Institutes of Health.

All NIH-funded centers aim to power the discovery process and advance science by facilitating and enhancing their collaborative efforts. The establishment and support of centers is part of the NIH's broader strategy to translate scientific discoveries into more effective improvements in people's health. In addition, other center and institute partnerships highlight Pennington Biomedical's work with the nation's military, bariatric surgery, and healthy aging.

Science Education, Training & Community Outreach

Pennington Biomedical is a premier training institution, a source of free health and nutrition resources, and a trusted expert within the general public and biomedical research community. The Division of Scientific Education supports and works with faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students, and the lay community through outreach activities that train the next generation of scientists, foster multidisciplinary scientific enrichment and collaboration, attract new investigators with relevant complementary expertise, and provide a conduit between researchers and the lay community.

Business Development & Economic Impact

The [Office of Innovation & Commercialization](#) helps advance the development of Pennington Biomedical Research Center innovations, supports the research enterprise, and works with entrepreneurs and external partners on translational research and to commercialize innovations that enhance the economy and benefit the public.

The Office is responsible for all aspects of commercialization, including intellectual property protection, licensing, and other traditional technology transfer-related activities. It also assists with material transfer agreements (MTAs), confidentiality agreements (CDAs and NDAs), Interinstitutional Agreements, and other innovation-related agreements. They are committed to fostering economic development for the Baton Rouge region and the State of Louisiana.

Since its inception in 1988, the Center has received \$1.15 billion in grant funding. In FY 2023-2024, operations supported an estimated economic output of \$156 million, \$96 million in earnings, and 1,549 jobs.

Leadership

Executive Director John Kirwan, PhD

John Kirwan, PhD, Executive Director of Pennington Biomedical Research Center, is an internationally renowned obesity, diabetes, and nutrition scientist whose professional expertise includes over 30 years of research, teaching, and service in the obesity and diabetes fields. His exceptional record of excellence in diabetes-related research, including the discovery that type 2 diabetes can often be cured by surgical

alteration of the intestines and stomach, made him the perfect choice to take the lead at Pennington Biomedical in January 2018.

Kirwan leads an internationally acclaimed biomedical research program focused on diabetes, obesity, nutrition, and exercise. He is currently Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on 10 U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants, and to date, he has generated more than \$70 million in research funding, most of which has come from NIH and the food, pharmaceutical, and medical device industries. He has published 300 scientific papers related to diabetes and metabolism in prestigious peer-reviewed journals, including the New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, Diabetes, and Diabetes Care.

Most recently, Dr. Kirwan served as the director of the Metabolic Translational Research Center and professor of molecular medicine at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. He also held faculty appointments at Case Western Reserve University as a professor of physiology and nutrition.

Kirwan received his clinical physiology training at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, MO.; his PhD in human bioenergetics at Ball State University, Muncie, IN.; his master's degree in exercise biochemistry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.; and his bachelor's degree (Hons) from the University of Limerick, Ireland.

ROLE OF THE DIVISION CHIEF FOR CLINICAL RESEARCH

The Division Chief for Clinical Research and Endowed Chair will lead all clinical research initiatives at Pennington Biomedical, establishing internationally acclaimed programs aligned with the Center's mission while reporting directly to the Executive Director. This senior leadership position requires a board-certified physician-scientist to drive innovative studies addressing critical health challenges, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia. This position carries a faculty rank of full professor with tenure.

Key Responsibilities

Administrative Leadership:

- Lead the clinical research enterprise at Pennington Biomedical Research Center.
- Provide expert consultation and guidance to faculty and administrators.
- Develop and implement policies, procedures, and long-range strategic goals for the Clinical Research division.

Chief Medical Officer:

- Direct the Clinical Research Oversight Committee, Medical Staff Oversight Committee, and related support services.

Independent Scientist:

- Conduct an independent research program.
- Establish a strong collaborative research network, both internally and externally.
- Secure external funding for independent research initiatives.
- Publish findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- Mentor postdoctoral fellows, clinical fellows, residents, and early career faculty.

Clinical Faculty:

- Maintain expertise and board certification in internal medicine and/or other medical subspecialty.
- Maintain an active membership on the Pennington Biomedical Medical staff.

Clinical:

- Provide medical oversight for research participants in Pennington Biomedical's programs.
- Deliver urgent care assessment and treatment for individuals who become ill or injured at Pennington Biomedical.
- Conduct diagnostic evaluations and/or treatment for individuals seeking physician services at Pennington Biomedical.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Develop and execute a forward-thinking clinical research strategy.

The Division Chief will lead the development and execution of a progressive, innovative clinical research strategy aligned with the Center's mission and vision to promote metabolic health and eliminate metabolic disease through scientific discoveries that create solutions from cells to society. The Division Chief will bring strategic vision and operational expertise to design, direct, and grow a dynamic clinical research portfolio focused on metabolic diseases and chronic health conditions.

Oversee the design, implementation, and management of a diverse clinical research portfolio.

The Division Chief will direct a comprehensive array of clinical research programs, including investigator-initiated studies, industry-sponsored trials, and large-scale, multi-site collaborations. They will provide oversight for key governance bodies such as the Clinical Research Oversight Committee and Medical Staff

Oversight Committee, ensuring compliance, quality assurance, and ethical standards across all studies. They will also collaborate closely with operational and regulatory support services to streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and support the successful execution of complex clinical trials.

Maintain the highest level of integrity, data quality, and patient safety.

The Division Chief will drive operational efficiency by developing and optimizing the clinical research infrastructure, including enhancing systems such as clinical trial management systems (CTMS), strengthening processes, and implementing effective participant recruitment and retention strategies. They will continue to streamline operations, introduce best practices, and ensure the seamless execution of clinical trials from initiation to closeout. The Division Chief will uphold the highest regulatory compliance standards, ensuring all research activities align with FDA regulations, ICH-GCP guidelines, and other global regulatory standards.

Lead, mentor, and grow a high-performing clinical research team.

The Division Chief will promote a culture of innovation, scientific rigor, and operational excellence and cultivate a collaborative and inclusive environment prioritizing scientific integrity. They will implement strategies emphasizing mentorship and career development to build a resilient and results-driven team and will guide professional development, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and champion cutting-edge methodologies.

Spearhead efforts to secure extramural funding.

The Division Chief will leverage their expertise to identify emerging funding opportunities, align proposals with agency priorities, and foster interdisciplinary collaborations. They will lead initiatives to develop competitive grant proposals and cultivate relationships with key funding bodies to sustain and expand Pennington's research portfolio. This includes actively pursuing funding from major federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Defense (DOD), and other relevant funding bodies. In addition to federal sources, the Division Chief will cultivate and strengthen partnerships with industry sponsors, engaging in collaborative research agreements and clinical trials that align with Pennington's mission.

Foster cross-departmental and external partnerships to drive collaborative research initiatives.

The Division Chief will be a key liaison to institutional leadership, regulatory agencies, external collaborators, and funding bodies to advance strategic goals and ensure alignment with emerging research priorities. They will bridge internal departments with academic institutions, industry sponsors, governmental agencies, and community organizations to cultivate relationships and form partnerships that will enhance the scope and depth of research initiatives and facilitate the translation of findings into real-world applications, improving health outcomes on both a local and global scale.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be an MD, MD/PhD (or equivalent) with an LSBME Medical License at the time of selection and qualify for a faculty appointment at the full professor level. In addition, the final candidate will meet most, if not all, of the following criteria:

- Minimum of 10 years of progressive leadership experience in clinical research, including a track record of managing complex clinical trials and large-scale human studies.
- Recognized expertise in metabolic disease research (e.g., obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular health, nutrition science) or related fields with a track record of relevant grant funding and high-impact publications; skills supporting and building the research programs of colleagues.
- Experience relating to clinical practice program development, expansion, and implementation.
- Proficient in selecting, onboarding, supervising, and retaining faculty through active mentorship.
- Proven ability to lead and grow large clinical research teams effectively, fostering a collaborative environment that promotes innovation and excellence in clinical research outcomes.
- Highly adept and at ease managing the day-to-day operational details with the ability to make strong and decisive decisions when needed.
- Approachable, inclusive, and compassionate; a record of promoting a culture of respect.
- Exudes professionalism and personal demeanor characterized by humility, genuineness, sincerity, and a passion for the organization's mission and objectives.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent electronically via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/lsu-pennington-biomedical-research-center/division-chief-clinical-research>.

Dan Rodas, Partner
Amy Gillespie, Senior Associate
Nicole Sancilio, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Pennington Biomedical Research Center is an equal employment opportunity employer and serves as a model employer for individuals with disabilities.

APPENDIX

About Baton Rouge

Louisiana has arguably the most colorful history and fascinating culture of any state in the nation. Baton Rouge, French for “Red Stick,” is the capital city of Louisiana. Situated on the banks of the Mississippi River, it represents the best of Louisiana’s vibrant culture. Just minutes from Pennington Biomedical, downtown Baton Rouge is a hot spot to attend an art exhibition or concert, or watch the sun set over the Mississippi River.

Over the last several years, the Baton Rouge area has enjoyed an unprecedented economic expansion, offering employment opportunities in diverse industry sectors.

Why Baton Rouge?

Baton Rouge is a cultural crossroads between the Cajun heartland of Lafayette (located about 55 miles southwest) and the birthplace of jazz and home of Mardi Gras, New Orleans (located about 80 miles to the southeast). Housing options in Baton Rouge are diverse and include historic neighborhoods like Spanish Town and the Garden District, riverfront apartments, chic, loft-style condos like the Commerce Building, cozy family neighborhoods, and luxury mansions.

The city boasts award-winning public and private school options; more than 900 restaurants; live concerts ranging from home-grown favorites to superstars like Kenny Chesney and James Taylor; a variety of museums, including one that houses a 65-million-year-old triceratops skull and a 5,000-year-old mummy; a nationally recognized, award-winning public library system; more than 180 parks across the region; and much more. Regardless of age or interest, the Baton Rouge Area is a great place to call home.

