



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Search for the Chair, Michael and Marian Ilitch Department of Surgery
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

THE SEARCH

Wayne State University School of Medicine invites an accomplished surgeon to lead the Michael and Marian Ilitch Department of Surgery. The Department includes major surgical divisions such as general surgery, surgical oncology, trauma, cardiothoracic, plastic and reconstructive surgery, pediatric surgery, vascular surgery, surgical critical care, ECMO and minimally invasive surgery. The Department of Surgery is responsible for educating approximately 1,200 medical students and training more than 70 residents and fellows across a broad clinical network that includes Harper University Hospital, Detroit Receiving Hospital, Michigan's first Level I trauma center, and the Children's Hospital of Michigan within the Detroit Medical Center, as well as the Karmanos Cancer Institute, an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center, and the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center. Through this extensive footprint, the Department plays a central role in advancing surgical care and training across Detroit and the broader Southeast Michigan region.

Anchored in Detroit for nearly 150 years, Wayne State University School of Medicine has been a center of pioneering surgical achievement, including the development of the world's first successful heart pump and advances in simulation, medical devices, and biologic therapies. The Department's faculty, including 47 full-time and more than 90 clinical faculty, deliver complex surgical care while shaping the next generation of surgeons. Their work spans high-acuity services such as trauma, burns, critical care, and oncology, as well as cutting-edge minimally invasive and robotic procedures.

This moment represents a pivotal leadership opportunity. Following two decades of leadership by Dr. Donald Weaver, the Department is entering a period of transition. The next Chair will set the strategic direction for the Department while collaborating with health system partners to elevate surgical services and optimize patient outcomes. Opportunities under the next Chair include: strengthening clinical alignment across institutions, building key programs and service lines, expanding research capacity, enhancing marketing and patient access, and positioning Wayne State Surgery as the premier destination

for surgical care and training in Southeast Michigan. The next Chair will have the mandate and the platform to unify, modernize, and elevate a department with deep roots, strong faculty loyalty, and significant strengths. They will advance graduate and postgraduate education to ensure an outstanding learning environment and experience for medical students, residents, and fellows.

Wayne State seeks a surgeon leader with the vision, operational acumen, and collaborative spirit to guide the Department of Surgery into its next era of clinical strength, educational excellence, and research advancement. Potential candidates are invited to consider how their experience and leadership approach can contribute to a department that plays a critical role in Detroit's surgical care and in the training of future generations of surgeons. Candidates who are committed to surgical excellence, devoted to education and mentorship, energized by complex academic medical environments, and inspired by the opportunity to shape a historic department's next chapter are encouraged to explore this role.

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

WAYNE STATE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

With roots dating back to 1868, [Wayne State University School of Medicine](#) is one of the nation's leading urban medical schools, distinguished by its deep commitment to education, research, clinical excellence, and service to the community. The School of Medicine is comprised of 23 departments, and its community includes 1,782 faculty, over 1,700 staff, 1,574 students, and 141 residents and fellows making it the largest single-campus medical school in the United States and a critical academic anchor for the region's healthcare ecosystem. Through longstanding clinical affiliations, the School provides care across a wide spectrum of settings, from tertiary and quaternary referral centers to safety-net hospitals, offering unparalleled exposure to complex disease, health disparities, and high-acuity care.

As a public research institution with a strong social mission, the School of Medicine is uniquely positioned to advance biomedical innovation while addressing the real-world health challenges of urban communities, providing an exceptional environment for academic leaders seeking to build impact at scale. Research and discovery are central to the School's mission, with strengths spanning basic, translational, clinical, and population-based investigation. Faculty are nationally recognized for work in areas such as neuroscience, oncology, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, and health equity, supported by a robust culture of interdisciplinary collaboration across Wayne State University.

WAYNE HEALTH

[Wayne Health](#), formerly Wayne State University Physician Group, is a nonprofit multi-specialty practice with nearly 400 physicians and advanced practice providers across 50 specialties. As the primary clinical service group and faculty practice plan for the Wayne State University School of Medicine, Wayne Health delivers comprehensive care from birth through end of life throughout southeastern Michigan.

Led by Mark Juzych, MD, Wayne Health's clinical mission is anchored by a longstanding partnership with the Detroit Medical Center, a nationally recognized academic health system serving Detroit and the surrounding region. The Detroit Medical Center includes flagship hospitals such as Detroit Receiving Hospital, Harper University Hospital, Hutzel Women's Hospital, and the Children's Hospital of Michigan. It provides tertiary and quaternary care, Level I trauma services, and essential safety-net coverage. This environment offers exceptional clinical depth, high acuity, and a patient population that reflects the full spectrum of urban health needs.

THE MICHAEL AND MARIAN ILITCH DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

[The Michael and Marian Ilitch Department of Surgery](#) has a long and distinguished history of leadership in surgical care, education, and research. From performing the world's first successful open-heart surgery to training Detroit's first African American general surgeon, the Department has driven innovation and progress in the field. The Department has trained many of Michigan's surgeons and pioneered major advancements, including the development of the world's first successful heart pump in collaboration with engineers from General Motors.

Education

Clinical training occurs at major sites within the Detroit Medical Center, including Harper University Hospital, Detroit Receiving Hospital, as well as the Karmanos Cancer Institute, Children's Hospital of Michigan, and John D. Dingell VA Medical Center. These sites collectively provide residents with exposure to trauma, complex oncologic care, critical care, minimally invasive surgery, and other essential surgical disciplines.

The residency is recognized for producing strong, well-prepared graduates, with solid board pass rates and a reputation for rigorous clinical training. The program operates within a clinical environment shared by Wayne State University, the Detroit Medical Center, and Wayne Health. Residents benefit from the breadth of experience and patient volume across these institutions.

In conjunction with its clinical partners the Department offers four fellowships: Advanced Minimally Invasive/Bariatric Surgery, Pediatric Surgery, Vascular, and Surgical Critical Care. While some subspecialty fellowships, such as plastic and reconstructive surgery, have experienced disruption in recent years, the Department hopes to rebuild and strengthen these offerings. The fellowship environment remains defined by high clinical intensity, strong faculty mentorship, and the opportunity to train within one of Detroit's major academic medical ecosystems.

Faculty engagement in clinical teaching is a longstanding strength, supported by an accomplished surgical faculty that includes specialists in trauma, surgical oncology, cardiothoracic surgery, vascular surgery, and more. Faculty are dedicated educators who prioritize mentorship and hands-on learning, and each hospital where residents rotate has full-time surgical faculty based on-site to ensure continuity and quality of instruction.

Recognizing that this is the future of surgery, the Department is actively involved in (1) the research and development of simulation technologies both within the Department and in partnership with both global and local hardware engineering and software development corporations, and (2) in applying advanced simulation technologies to residency and fellowship training.

Research

Research in the Department spans basic, translational, clinical, and health services research aligned with the institution's urban mission. Faculty pursue scholarship across a broad range of surgical disciplines, with major strengths in trauma and acute care surgery, oncology, vascular surgery, transplantation, and surgical education. Surgeons at Wayne State contribute to translational research and oncology-focused population studies, serve as site-PIs for clinical trials, and participate in multi-center collaborations that expand the Department's scientific reach. The Department has access to more than 10,000 square feet of laboratory space, including large and small animal facilities, as well as advanced engineering resources such as atomic force microscopes and a Class 10/100 Clean Room in the Smart Sensors and Integrated Microsystems (SSIM) Lab. These capabilities support integrated medical, surgical, and microbiological research within a single campus. In addition to the work led by individual investigators, the Department also supports institutional priorities through academic laboratories and commercial or industrial partnerships.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The Chair will report to the Dean of the Wayne State University School of Medicine and lead the Department's core mission of excellence in clinical care, education, and research. In addition to responsibilities at the School of Medicine, the Chair will hold key clinical and academic leadership roles across partner institutions, serving as Surgeon-in-Chief at the Detroit Medical Center and overseeing surgical faculty at the Karmanos Cancer Institute and the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center.

The role is deeply aligned with the School's mission to serve Detroit, leveraging a major regional presence and a committed faculty to drive measurable impact.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHAIR

Key opportunities and challenges the Chair will address include:

Develop a strategic vision to elevate the Department

The next Chair will have a distinctive opportunity to shape the future of the Department of Surgery by crafting a bold, collaborative vision for growth and excellence. To do this effectively, the Chair will need a clear understanding of the Department's current landscape, including its longstanding impact on the Detroit metro area and Southeast Michigan, the wide geographic reach it serves, and matrixed reporting structures. By engaging stakeholders across the enterprise, the Chair will foster a culture grounded in

collaboration, transparency, and shared purpose. Faculty and leadership have identified several promising avenues for strategic advancement, including deepening clinical partnerships, revitalizing key subspecialties such as plastic surgery, and improving clinical operations in coordination with major affiliates. Through this work, the Chair will position the Department of Surgery to build on its historic strengths, expand its regional influence, and serve as a valued leader in academic medicine and a trusted partner to the communities it serves.

Navigate and deepen partnerships within a multi-institutional, matrixed clinical environment

Wayne State Surgery operates within a unique clinical ecosystem. The next Chair must skillfully navigate relationships across Wayne State University, Wayne Health, the Detroit Medical Center, Karmanos, and other affiliated systems in an environment where shared responsibilities, varying governance structures and reporting lines, and distinct institutional priorities require steady communication, trust building, and clear alignment. Working closely with university and clinical leaders, the Chair will help refine these partnerships to support high-quality surgical education, enhance clinical operations, bolster research productivity, and ensure financial sustainability. The Chair will have the opportunity to bring greater clarity to roles and decision-making, strengthen cross-institutional collaboration, advocate effectively for the Department, and foster a more cohesive culture that supports shared success.

Enhance clinical volume, operations, and market position

The next Chair will work collaboratively across the Department's clinical partners to strengthen clinical operations, expand referral pathways, and elevate the Department's profile in a competitive market. The Chair will prioritize strategic growth by ensuring new programs are well supported while sustaining the strength of existing divisions. Success will depend on data-driven decision-making, strong relationships, and effective coordination across service lines to increase patient volume and operational efficiency. Through focused leadership and partnership, the Chair will help advance high-quality, patient-centered care while strengthening the Department's academic and research missions.

Advance a strong financial strategy for the Department

The next Chair will ensure the Department's long-term fiscal stability by executing a mission-aligned financial strategy that supports clinical excellence, academic growth, and innovation. This requires a strong grasp of contemporary academic medicine finances, including funds flow, compensation models, and the constraints of a multi-partner environment, as well as the ability to design forward-looking, practical solutions. Working closely with School of Medicine leaders, fellow chairs, and clinical partners, the Chair will set clear priorities, advocate for resources, and align investments with the Department's strategic goals. By leveraging the Department's clinical and academic strengths, the Chair will promote disciplined financial stewardship that increases impact and supports the full scope of its missions.

Foster educational excellence

With responsibility for the surgical education of roughly 1,200 medical students and more than 70 residents and fellows, the Department plays a central role in the School of Medicine's mission. The next Chair will ensure consistent standards of excellence across training programs, equitable learning experiences across clinical sites, and strong faculty engagement in teaching and mentorship. They will also champion investments in advanced simulation and experiential learning technologies and collaborate closely with School of Medicine leadership to align undergraduate and graduate medical education priorities.

Recruit and retain exceptional talent

The next Chair will play a critical role in shaping the Department's future by attracting, recruiting, and retaining outstanding surgical talent. They will foster a culture that supports long-term success through clear expectations and pathways for advancement, robust mentorship, and meaningful leadership opportunities. The Chair will serve as a visible, engaged mentor, investing in faculty development, strengthening collaboration, and building an environment where professional growth thrives. Through thoughtful stewardship of people and programs, the Chair will cultivate a culture of excellence and accountability aligned with Wayne State's mission to serve Detroit and Southeast Michigan and lead in academic medicine.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will be a nationally recognized academic surgeon with a record of accomplishment, and the leadership skills necessary to guide a large, complex department through a period of continued growth and transformation.

While no one candidate will embody them all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following attributes:

- An earned MD or MD/PhD with board certification in a surgical specialty and eligibility for licensure in the State of Michigan, and a scholarly record meriting appointment at the rank of professor at Wayne State University
- Distinguished academic surgeon with a strong clinical background and a national reputation for excellence
- Demonstrated ability to build and expand clinical programs and establish centers of excellence that advance patient care
- Skill in recruiting, developing, and retaining top surgical faculty to strengthen departmental performance
- Experience navigating diverse healthcare systems and forging partnerships across academic, clinical, and community settings
- Operational and financial acumen, with the ability to manage budgets and drive strategic growth understanding the complex financial pressures facing academic healthcare

- Commitment to improving urban health and expanding access to care for underserved populations
- Dedication to medical education and the advancement of high-quality surgical training programs
- Research leadership, demonstrated through promoting scholarly productivity and success in securing extramural funding
- Visionary, collaborative leadership, with the capacity to unify faculty across multiple institutions and build a nationally recognized department
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage internal and external audiences
- Strategic thinking and problem-solving skills, with the ability to anticipate challenges, adapt to change, and implement innovative solutions

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Wayne State University has retained the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller, to assist in this search. All applications, nominations, referrals, and inquiries should be sent in confidence to:

Amy Segal, Partner
Jasmine Miller, Senior Associate
Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/wayne-state-university-school-medicine/chair-michael-and-marian-ilitch-department>

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Isaacson, Miller, and Wayne State University are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodation.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Wayne State University. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Wayne State University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.