

VANDERBILT  UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER

Executive Director, Animal Care & Use Program  
Vanderbilt University Medical Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

## THE SEARCH

Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), in partnership with Vanderbilt University (VU), seeks an accomplished senior leader to serve as Executive Director of the Animal Care & Use Program (ACUP). Reporting to executive research leadership at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, the Executive Director holds institution-wide responsibility for the strategy, performance, and integrity of Vanderbilt's animal research enterprise.

Animal research is foundational to Vanderbilt's discovery and translational research mission and operates at a significant scale across VUMC, Vanderbilt University, and affiliated research environments. The ACUP is administered centrally by VUMC and encompasses animal care operations, veterinary clinical services, regulatory compliance and IACUC support, and comparative and translational pathology services. As a result, the Executive Director functions not as a narrow compliance or committee-support leader, but as the senior enterprise steward of a complex, highly regulated, and mission-critical program.

The Executive Director serves as the single point of ownership for the ACUP's operational stability, regulatory posture, veterinary leadership, and long-term readiness. This leader is expected to engage regularly with senior institutional officials, advising on animal research capacity, infrastructure needs, institutional risk, and strategic tradeoffs. The role also includes serving as, or overseeing, the Attending Veterinarian function, elevating veterinary authority and animal welfare decision-making into Vanderbilt's executive leadership framework.

This search reflects Vanderbilt's recognition that leadership of animal research sits at the core of the institution's research enterprise and reputational responsibility. The successful candidate will bring the judgment, credibility, and executive presence to steward a large, visible program—earning the confidence of faculty, researchers, staff, regulators, and senior leadership, while enabling ethical, high-quality research at scale.

VUMC has partnered with Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to help with this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be submitted to Isaacson, Miller as indicated at the end of this document. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/vanderbilt-university-medical-center/executive-director-animal-care-and-use-program>

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## VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Vanderbilt University Medical Center is one of the nation's leading academic medical centers and a major driver of biomedical discovery, clinical innovation, and regional economic impact. Based in Nashville, Tennessee, VUMC is an independent nonprofit health system and research institution affiliated with Vanderbilt University, employing tens of thousands of professionals across hospitals, clinics, research facilities, and academic programs. Across its clinical enterprise, VUMC supports more than 3 million patient visits annually, reflecting the scale and complexity of its healthcare operations.

VUMC is also a nationally prominent research institution. The Vanderbilt University School of Medicine consistently ranks among the top medical schools in the country for National Institutes of Health funding, with annual federal support approaching \$700 million. Across Vanderbilt University and VUMC, external research awards regularly exceed \$1 billion per year, spanning basic, translational, and clinical investigation. This sustained level of research activity places Vanderbilt among the most research-intensive academic medical enterprises in the United States.

The Medical Center's research infrastructure includes hundreds of laboratories, core facilities, and shared resources supporting a broad range of scientific disciplines. Animal research is a foundational component of this enterprise, enabling discovery and translational work across fields and supporting hundreds of principal investigators. As a result, animal research capacity, regulatory integrity, and operational reliability are treated as core institutional responsibilities rather than ancillary support functions.

Beyond its academic and clinical missions, VUMC and Vanderbilt University together represent one of the largest economic engines in the region, generating tens of billions of dollars in annual economic impact statewide and supporting well over 100,000 jobs. This scale underscores both the visibility and the public accountability of the institution and its research activities.

Operating in a complex academic and healthcare environment, VUMC places a premium on operational excellence, proactive risk management, and transparent communication, particularly in areas such as animal research that carry heightened ethical, regulatory, and reputational sensitivity. The scope, scale, and intensity of Vanderbilt's research enterprise create both opportunity and responsibility for leaders charged with stewarding critical research infrastructure.

## THE ANIMAL CARE & USE PROGRAM

### Program Overview

Vanderbilt's Animal Care & Use Program is a centrally administered, fully integrated enterprise that supports animal research across Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Vanderbilt University, and affiliated research environments, including the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (TVHS). The VA TVHS contracts veterinary care and IACUC services through VUMC, and the Executive Director oversees these contracted services and associated regulatory and veterinary functions. The program operates at a

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significant scale, serving approximately 300 principal investigators and supporting more than 550 active IACUC-approved protocols, spanning basic, translational, and preclinical science and encompassing a broad portfolio of NIH- and sponsor-funded research.

### **Integrated Enterprise Model**

Rather than functioning as a collection of separate compliance, veterinary, and operations units, the ACUP is intentionally structured as a single, unified program with end-to-end responsibility for the animal research lifecycle. The program encompasses animal care and facility operations, veterinary clinical services, regulatory compliance and IACUC support, and comparative and translational pathology services, all aligned under one leadership structure. This integrated model reduces fragmentation, enables coordinated decision-making, and places clear accountability for animal welfare, research enablement, and regulatory integrity within a single enterprise.

### **Operations and Workforce**

ACUP operations support multiple research facilities and vivaria, operating continuously to meet the needs of a high-volume research environment. The program oversees large, multidisciplinary teams spanning animal care staff, veterinarians, compliance professionals, and administrative personnel, and manages complex workflows related to husbandry, veterinary care, preventive medicine, procurement, space utilization, and facilities management. These operations are designed to scale with Vanderbilt's research ambitions while maintaining consistency, reliability, and high standards of animal care.

### **Regulatory Oversight and Accreditation**

The regulatory and compliance functions within ACUP support thousands of active animal research protocols and oversee ongoing post-approval monitoring, training, and reporting. The program maintains full accreditation from the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC International) and operates under sustained federal, sponsor, and accrediting-body scrutiny. As a result, inspection readiness, documentation integrity, and proactive issue identification are core operational expectations rather than episodic activities.

### **Institutional Role and Visibility**

Given the size, visibility, and funding profile of Vanderbilt's research enterprise, the ACUP is viewed by executive leadership as critical institutional infrastructure. Program leadership is expected to provide clear visibility into capacity constraints, workforce needs, capital and space planning, regulatory posture, and emerging risks, ensuring that animal research can proceed ethically, compliantly, and without disruption. This unified operating model elevates the ACUP from a support function to a central pillar of Vanderbilt's research enterprise.

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## THE ROLE

### **Role Overview**

The Executive Director of the Animal Care & Use Program serves as the senior leader responsible for the performance, integrity, and long-term readiness of Vanderbilt's animal research program. The role requires sound judgment, executive presence, and the ability to operate effectively across operational, regulatory, veterinary, and academic domains within a complex institutional environment.

### **Strategy, Capacity, and Infrastructure**

The Executive Director owns program-wide strategy for animal research capacity, infrastructure, and operations. This includes responsibility for facilities planning, space allocation, workforce strategy, and capital investment across animal care operations, veterinary services, compliance functions, and comparative and translational pathology. The role requires anticipating future research needs and aligning ACUP resources to support growth, innovation, and evolving scientific priorities, including increasingly specialized animal research requirements (e.g., microbiome-sensitive, gnotobiotic, and other high-complexity models) that place unique demands on space configuration, husbandry practices, staffing expertise, and environmental controls.

### **Operational Stewardship**

Operational stewardship is central to the role. The Executive Director is accountable for continuous, high-quality animal care and facility operations, including husbandry, veterinary clinical services, preventive medicine, procurement, and facilities management. The role requires balancing service quality, cost efficiency, and scalability in a high-volume research environment, while maintaining a culture of professionalism, accountability, and animal welfare across a large, multidisciplinary workforce. This includes active stewardship of space utilization and serving as a broker among investigators, facilities leadership, and senior administration to align scientific needs with available resources.

### **Regulatory Oversight and Accreditation**

The Executive Director holds enterprise responsibility for regulatory compliance and accreditation outcomes. This includes oversight of IACUC administrative support, protocol review processes, post-approval monitoring, training, reporting, and inspection readiness. The role requires maintaining full accreditation and ensuring that senior leadership has confidence in the program's compliance posture, with no surprises arising from regulatory or sponsor scrutiny.

### **Veterinary Leadership**

The role includes serving as, or overseeing, the Attending Veterinarian function, ensuring that the program of veterinary care meets regulatory and professional standards. The Executive Director provides

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credible veterinary leadership, exercises sound clinical judgment in animal welfare matters, and ensures that veterinary authority is appropriately integrated into institutional decision-making.

### **Executive Advisory Role**

The Executive Director operates as a senior advisor to institutional leadership on issues related to animal research capacity, risk, and readiness. This includes communicating clearly with senior leaders about operational constraints, infrastructure needs, regulatory risks, and strategic tradeoffs, as well as advising on emerging or evolving research needs—such as high-containment or other specialized animal research models—within the context of institutional priorities, feasibility, and risk.

### **Academic Alignment**

Given Vanderbilt's integrated academic model, the Executive Director also holds responsibility for academic alignment within the Division of Comparative Medicine. The role requires credibility within an academic environment, oversight of veterinary faculty effort and development, and alignment of service, research, and educational missions with institutional and departmental priorities.

### **Measures of Success**

Success in the role is measured by program stability, institutional trust, and forward-looking readiness. The Executive Director ensures that Vanderbilt's animal research enterprise operates with integrity, transparency, and resilience, enabling high-quality research while protecting the institution's ethical standards and reputation.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The Executive Director of the Animal Care & Use Program will assume leadership of a large, highly visible enterprise at the intersection of research enablement, animal welfare, regulatory oversight, and institutional risk. The following opportunities and challenges define the scope and complexity of the role and underscore the level of judgment and leadership required for success.

- Steward a mission-critical, fully integrated animal research enterprise that is central to Vanderbilt's scientific ambition, balancing operational reliability, animal welfare, regulatory rigor, and research enablement within a single accountable structure.
- Anticipate and plan for future research sustainability and strategic growth in an environment where animal research capacity, facilities, and workforce constraints require thoughtful, forward-looking infrastructure and investment decisions.
- Maintain institutional confidence in a complex and evolving regulatory environment, ensuring stable accreditation, inspection readiness, and transparent communication with senior leadership under sustained external scrutiny.
- Navigate the ethical, reputational, and public-facing sensitivities inherent in animal research, including preparedness for high-visibility animal welfare issues or external attention.

- Operate effectively within a multi-institutional academic environment, aligning stakeholders across Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Vanderbilt University, and affiliated settings while maintaining consistent standards and trust.
- Address workforce stability, training, and retention challenges within animal care operations, particularly in areas requiring specialized expertise, where staff turnover can pose risks to animal welfare, compliance, and research continuity.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring a combination of senior leadership experience, sound judgment, and credibility across animal research operations, regulatory oversight, and academic environments. Vanderbilt seeks a leader who has demonstrated the ability to own complex programs at scale and to operate effectively in high-visibility, high-accountability settings.

Other key qualifications for the role include:

- Demonstrated experience leading or owning a large, complex animal research, animal care, or closely related research enterprise within an academic medical center, research university, government research environment, or comparable setting.
- Deep familiarity with the regulatory and accreditation landscape governing animal research, including direct experience with AAALAC accreditation, federal inspections, and sponsor oversight, and the ability to maintain institutional confidence under scrutiny.
- Credible engagement with veterinary medicine and animal welfare, either through direct clinical training or through sustained leadership of veterinary professionals and programs, including comfort exercising judgment in sensitive welfare decisions.
- Proven ability to operate at the executive level, communicating clearly with senior leadership about risk, capacity, priorities, and tradeoffs, and earning trust through transparency, professionalism, and follow-through.
- Experience navigating academic environments, including working effectively with faculty, supporting academic standards, and aligning service and operational missions with research and educational priorities.
- Leadership style characterized by integrity, sound judgment, and collaboration, with a service-oriented, problem-solving approach and the ability to uphold clear standards in a highly regulated environment.

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## 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 via the Isaacson, Miller website. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/vanderbilt-university-medical-center/executive-director-animal-care-and-use-program>

Randi Herrick, Partner  
Sam Ruth, Senior Associate  
Maya Bennet, Senior Search Coordinator

*Vanderbilt University Medical Center recognizes that diversity is essential for excellence and innovation. They are committed to an inclusive environment where everyone has the chance to thrive and to the principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.*

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Vanderbilt 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 Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Vanderbilt University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*