



Senior Associate Dean for Research, University of Tennessee Health Sciences, College of
Medicine
Memphis, Tennessee

THE SEARCH:

[The University of Tennessee Health Sciences College of Medicine](#) (UTHS COM) seeks a distinguished research leader with strategic vision, administrative experience, and demonstrated ability to work across multiple stakeholders to serve as the Senior Associate Dean for Research (SADR). Based in Memphis, the SADR will provide strategic and administrative leadership for the research mission of the college, collaborating closely with the Executive Dean and Vice Chancellor for Research to support and grow a robust research portfolio.

UTHS is defined by their mission to transform lives through collaborative and inclusive education, research and scholarship, clinical care, and public service. The COM, with campuses in Memphis, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, exemplifies this mission with their statewide service. The COM has over 14,000 alumni, with many providing care for patients across the state and region (COM faculty practice at hospitals across the Memphis region, with regional campuses maintaining strong affiliations with leading health systems in their cities). The COM drives research at UTHS, with almost \$65 million in total research awards in FY25, including \$38 million from the NIH. In 2025, University of Tennessee Health Sciences earned the prestigious R1 designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

The SADR will serve as the COM's lead for research, overseeing a research portfolio spanning foundational to clinical research. The COM has strengths in neuroscience, cancer, substance use disorders, infectious diseases, genetics, genomics, informatics, and chronic diseases, with opportunities to grow in many different areas. The SADR will work with UTHS and COM leadership to identify strategic growth opportunities and support faculty as they develop their research portfolios. The SADR will oversee research infrastructure for the COM and collaborate closely with the Vice Chancellor's Office of Research to ensure alignment with UTHS and system-level goals. The SADR will also maintain and grow existing relationships across the COM, campus, and system, and with external partners including health systems and research collaborators.

Reporting to [Michael Hocker, MD, MHS](#), Executive Dean, College of Medicine, the SADR is charged with strategic and operational leadership across all College of Medicine research, fostering a culture of innovation, interprofessional collaboration, and scholarly achievement. Qualified candidates must hold an MD, DO, and/or PhD (or equivalent), with applicable leadership experience in an academic medical center setting. The successful candidate will qualify for an appointment as an associate or full professor in the College of Medicine and have a history of sustained external grant funding and an exemplary research publication record.

UTHS COM has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries in confidence to Isaacson, Miller, as indicated later in this document.

University of Tennessee Health Sciences

The University of Tennessee Health Sciences in Memphis was founded in 1911, launching programs in medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, and following up with programs in health professions, graduate health sciences, and nursing shortly thereafter. Part of the University of Tennessee System, UTHS serves the entire state and is part of the system that carries the land grant mission and an R1 research university. UTHS awarded over 1,100 degrees and trained over 1,400 residents and fellows in 2023 while receiving over \$84 million in research awards in FY25. UTHS has trained over 53,000 healthcare professionals since its inception, making it the largest educator of healthcare professionals in the state.

The UTHS Vice Chancellor for Research leads a central [Office of Research](#), which oversees campus-wide research strategy, institutionally supported core facilities, several interdisciplinary research institutes, and administrative functions including the Office of Sponsored Programs, Research Development, Regulatory Support, IRB and IACUC, and works closely with [the University of Tennessee Research Foundation](#) to advance tech transfer, licensing, and commercialization efforts across the UT system. The Vice Chancellor for Research also partners with all the College Associate Deans for Research and the College of Graduate Health Sciences as the senior leadership team advising campus-wide research strategy.

There are nine institutionally supported and subsidized core facilities located on the UTHS campus, including the Laboratory Animal Care Unit, the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory, the Molecular Resource Center, the Molecular Bioinformatics core, the Flow Cytometry and Cell Sorting core, the Proteomics & Metabolomics Core, the Research Histology Core, the Medicinal Chemistry core and the Advanced Animal Imaging core.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

UT Health Sciences COM traces its origins to 1889 when it was founded as the Tennessee Medical College in Nashville. In 1911, the College moved to Memphis as the University of Tennessee's College of Medicine. In the following 100+ years, the COM has developed world-class clinical, education, and research

programs to advance the health of the people of Tennessee, the United States, and the world. The COM in Memphis has 27 departments, over 1,200 faculty, over 700 medical students, 60 PA students, and 860 residents and fellows. In addition to the Memphis campus, the COM includes regional campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville.

Research

The COM has multiple arms of strength in research and accounted for \$38 million in NIH funding and over \$64 million in overall grants and contracts in FY25 and is the primary driver of funded research for the campus. The COM supports interdisciplinary centers, including the Center for Biomedical Informatics, the UTHS Center for Cancer Research, the Center for Developmental Disabilities, the UTHS Center for Health System Improvement, the Center for Integrative and Translational Genomics, and the Center for Sickle Cell Disease.

Many faculty are involved with other UT Health Sciences research institutes, including the Children's Foundation Research Institute at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, the Institute for the Study of Host-Pathogen Systems, Methodist Transplant Institute, and the UTHS Neuroscience Institute. The COM has five basic science departments – anatomy and neurobiology; genetics, genomic, and informatics; microbiology, immunology, and biochemistry; pharmacology, addiction science, and toxicology; and physiology. Clinical departments also conduct research across the spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research, including clinical trials, community-based research, and outcomes research.

The different College of Medicine campuses maintain unique research strengths and focuses. The flagship COM in Memphis is a hub for basic science, with considerable strength in neuroscience, substance use disorder research, infectious disease research, and chronic diseases research including hypertension and hyperlipidemia. The regional campus in Knoxville is focused on translational research, leveraging its proximity to UT-Knoxville and relationships with industry to advance research. The campuses in Chattanooga and Nashville conduct clinical research with an emphasis on clinical trials. This includes industry sponsored trials, some federally funded trials, and investigator-initiated trials.

Education

The COM underwent a successful full-site accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) in 2021. The program is approaching its full accreditation term with the next full survey visit expected in 2029-30. The COM also offers numerous GME programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and a Physician Assistant Program accredited by ARC-PA. The COM offers an accelerated 3-year MD program for students who wish to complete their residency at UT Health Sciences within family medicine, internal medicine, medicine-pediatrics, neurology, pediatrics, or psychiatry, and also grants combined MD/PhD degrees.

Clinical Care

UT Health Sciences, through its statewide partnerships, offers a unique and invaluable experience where healthcare professionals can train in different hospitals/health systems, providing exposure to a diverse population of patients in urban and rural settings. The primary clinical partners for the College of Medicine in Memphis are Regional One, Methodist, and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, with additional partnerships across the state. The appendix contains a full listing of the COM's clinical affiliates.

Faculty within the COM participate in practice groups that contribute more than \$300 million annually to the statewide mission. Faculty are dually employed by a Faculty Practice Group (FPG) and the University. Professional reimbursements for clinical activity accrue to the appropriate physician practice group. Inpatient and ancillary reimbursements accrue to the appropriate healthcare facility. Clinical revenues are not recorded in the financial accounts of the COM. These FPGs, which serve as the core faculty for partner teaching hospitals, include but are not limited to: University Clinical Health (UCH), UT Regional One Physicians (UTROP), and UT Le Bonheur Pediatric Specialists (ULPS).

Within the Memphis community, UT Health Sciences physicians provide excellent patient care and training for the next generation of clinicians. COM faculty, staff, and students are also active in the community, running free clinics for underserved populations, conducting community-based research to impact patient lives, and supporting initiatives to enhance the health and well-being of the region.

ROLE OF THE SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH

The Senior Associate Dean for Research (SADR) serves as the strategic and administrative leader for research in the College of Medicine. The SADR provides leadership, coordination, and advocacy across the research ecosystem, supporting department chairs, center directors, and individual investigators while advancing the College's research mission. Responsibilities include oversight of College of Medicine research cores and shared resources, optimization of research space, support for faculty recruitment and retention, and fostering a collaborative environment that promotes discovery, innovation, translational research, and workforce development.

The SADR serves on the Executive Dean's leadership team and advises on research strategy, infrastructure, resource allocation, and programmatic priorities. As the College's principal advocate for research, the SADR will help strengthen the research environment through faculty development, grant competitiveness, research infrastructure modernization, and the identification and removal of barriers that impede research productivity. The SADR role is expected to be 0.6 FTE administrative, with additional time available for scholarly and clinical pursuits.

The SADR will report to the Executive Dean and work closely with [Jessica Snowden, MD, MS](#), Vice Chancellor for Research, and the UTHS Office of Research to align institutional research priorities and advance initiatives that support faculty success and research growth. The SADR will also maintain strong collaborative relationships with research leadership across the College's campuses in Knoxville,

Chattanooga, Nashville, and Memphis; other UTHS and University of Tennessee colleges; affiliated health systems; community organizations; industry collaborators; and philanthropic partners.

Given UTHS's distributed research model and extensive network of clinical partners, the SADR will serve as an important convener and collaborator, fostering partnerships across campuses and institutions, expanding translational and clinical research opportunities, facilitating team science, and helping build a more integrated and impactful research enterprise. Ultimately, the SADR will be charged with strengthening research capacity, cultivating a culture of collaboration and excellence, and positioning the College of Medicine for its next era of research growth and impact.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN

Define and execute a strategic plan for research growth

The College of Medicine is the primary driver of research on the campus, bringing in a majority of funded research for UTHS which recently achieved Carnegie R1 status, creating a unique inflection point for the institution. The SADR will work closely with research leadership to assess the opportunities for the college and set a strategy that aligns with the goals of the COM, campus, system, and health system partners. The SADR will advocate for research internally and externally, championing the great work being done and the opportunities for greater impact in the community, state, and beyond. Part of this strategic plan will include assessing opportunities to diversify and expand funding sources, exploring federal funding opportunities, private foundations, industry-sponsored research, and philanthropic support to grow research in the COM. The SADR will also work closely with the University of Tennessee Research Foundation, ensuring there are clear pathways for innovation, licensing, and commercialization of discoveries.

Strengthen research capacity and infrastructure

The SADR works in conjunction with the UTHS Office of Research to oversee research infrastructure for the COM. The SADR will maintain and expand access to research cores, ensuring equipment and technology remains up to date and supports the needs of the college. The SADR will also partner closely with the Vice Chancellor for Research to support a robust clinical trials infrastructure that accommodates clinical partners in the region. The SADR will also provide onboarding and continued support for faculty in the grant submission process, guiding investigators through the process and helping them coordinate with the needs of the office of sponsored research. By enhancing the environment in which research is conducted, the SADR will play a critical role in increasing faculty satisfaction, supporting retention, and positioning the College of Medicine for sustained research growth and competitiveness. The SADR will be a key decision maker in the build out of additional planned wet and dry research laboratory space.

Elevate faculty success through recruitment, development, and retention

The SADR serves the faculty, putting their effort into the success of others. The next SADR will work closely with chairs and center directors to support the recruitment of research faculty into the COM, including assisting with space and infrastructure needs. Beyond recruitment, the next SADR will emphasize mentorship and retention, identifying opportunities for talented faculty to grow as scientists and leaders. The SADR will also foster an ecosystem that enables faculty to thrive by improving access to resources, removing barriers to productivity, strengthening support services, and promoting transparency around research investments.

Advance statewide and interdisciplinary research partnerships

The SADR works closely with the Office of Research, aligning priorities and resources to maximize the impact of research for the school and campus. The SADR will also look outside the College of Medicine, forging partnerships with the College of Pharmacy, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, and College of Health Professions to support interdisciplinary research. The SADR maintains close ties to regional campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, leveraging the unique strengths and priorities of each campus to advance research that impacts the entire state, region, and nation. The SADR must be collaborative and creative, prioritizing mutually beneficial research opportunities and improving access to research opportunities across all campuses in the COM.

Expand relationships with clinical, industry, and research partners

UTHS serves all of Tennessee, which is exemplified by their numerous clinical and research partners. The SADR plays an important role in maintaining these relationships, connecting research in the COM with the priorities of their external partners. The next SADR will maintain critical relationships with key health systems (please visit the appendix), finding alignment and synergy between the clinical mission and priorities with research opportunities. The COM also partners with research labs, including Oak Ridge National Laboratory, which is at the cutting edge of computation biosciences, as well as St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The SADR will seek out opportunities that leverage the expertise of COM faculty and research partners to advance high impact research.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This position requires a collaborative leader with strategic vision, emotional intelligence, and demonstrated ability to balance operational and academic priorities.

Essential Qualifications

- MD, DO, and/or PhD (or equivalent) with applicable leadership experience in an academic medical center setting;
- Minimum of five years of progressive academic leadership experience in an LCME-accredited medical school or academic health system;
- Demonstrated success in advancing multidisciplinary research priorities in an academic setting;

- Extensive history of external grant funding and exemplary research publication record, or a comparable record/experience working with pharma.
- Qualified for an appointment as an associate or full professor at UTHS COM.

Preferred Experience and Leadership Attributes

- Experience working collaboratively with faculty, staff, students and shared governance groups.
- A strong commitment to teamwork and ability to work with deans, department chairs, and researchers in establishing financially stable and excellent research programs.
- Knowledge and experience with intellectual property, the transfer of technologies from lab to market, and the use of industry partnerships in an academic setting, and an interest in providing creative leadership to such efforts.
- Interest and commitment to fostering entrepreneurial efforts among students, faculty and staff.
- Experience in working with public and private groups who fund research, including experience with Federal funding agencies, private foundations, industrial partners, and private donors.
- Track record of effective communication; demonstrated ability to work with media and public officials to promote research.
- Strong organizational and managerial skills
- Experience in faculty hiring, retention, and professional development, with a focus on supporting excellence in research.
- Operational and financial management experience;
- A community-oriented convenor, mentor, and consensus-builder;
- Ability to inspire and engage faculty, staff, and learners in a shared research mission;
- Demonstrated commitment to servant leadership, mentorship, and the academic values of integrity, compassion, and excellence;
- Skill in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and aligning academic and clinical priorities.

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: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-tennessee-health-sciences-college-medicine/senior-associate-dean-research>

Jamie Sands, Partner
 Nicholas Strand, Managing Associate
 Lileana Sethares, Senior Search Coordinator
 Isaacson, Miller

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM

The University of Tennessee System supports five universities – UT Health Sciences, UT Knoxville, UT Chattanooga, UT Martin, and UT Southern – and two statewide institutes: the Institute for Public Service and the Institute of Agriculture. The system has an enrollment of over 53,000 students, has over 360,000 living alumni, and maintains an endowment of over \$1 billion. The University of Tennessee system, under the remarkable, integrative leadership of [President Randy Boyd](#), embarked on a campaign to identify and develop system-wide core values, creating “[Be One UT](#).” These core values guide all UT campuses, including UT Health Sciences. President Boyd’s inspirational leadership is championing increased student enrollment to 71,000 by 2030, growth in research and philanthropy, and impacting major societal and public health issues for Tennessee in making this “the greatest decade” for the University of Tennessee.

University of Tennessee Health Sciences

UT Health Sciences COM traces its origins to 1889 when it was founded as the Tennessee Medical College in Knoxville. In 1911, the College moved to Memphis as the University of Tennessee’s College of Medicine. In the following 100+ years, the COM has developed world-class clinical, education, and research programs to advance the health of the people of Tennessee, the United States, and the world.

The campus grew its statewide footprint, launching the UT Graduate School of Medicine in Knoxville in 1963, the UT College of Medicine in Chattanooga in 1974, and in 2014, UT Health Sciences launched a campus in Nashville. The six colleges across four campuses enrolled over 3,000 students in the Fall of 2023 and employ more than 6,000 people, contributing approximately \$4 billion to the Tennessee economy. UT Health Sciences is built on the strategic pillars of engaging communities, educational excellence, expanding research, advancing health, and developing talent to achieve its mission of transforming lives through collaborative and inclusive education, research/scholarship, clinical care, and public service.

While Memphis serves as the flagship campus, with six colleges, [Dentistry](#), [Graduate Health Sciences](#), [Health Professions](#), [Medicine](#), [Nursing](#), and [Pharmacy](#), the multiple campuses of UT Health Sciences are strategic in enabling expanded reach and impact across the entire state, with each campus reflecting the city and region and also offering distinct expertise - such that UT Health Sciences is truly statewide (“Memphis is our home and Tennessee is our campus.”) in its presence.

UT Health Sciences is led by [Peter Buckley, MD](#), who became the 11th Chancellor of UT Health Sciences in 2022. Dr. Buckley serves as the CEO, overseeing all six health science colleges. Prior to coming to UT Health Sciences, Chancellor Buckley was the dean at Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Medicine, and Medical College of Georgia. He previously served as the chair of psychiatry at the Medical College of Georgia and vice chair at Case Western Reserve University.

University of Tennessee Health Sciences Clinical Affiliates

UTHS and the College of Medicine maintain relationships with several health systems in the state, including:

- [Regional One Health](#) – public hospital with specialties in trauma, burn, high risk obstetrics, and newborn medicine. UT Health Sciences physicians constitute almost 100% of Regional One Health’s medical staff. Regional One Health anchors many of the UT Health Sciences’ most critical adult clinical training and research programs in Memphis. In addressing the decline of Regional One Health’s facilities’ needs and its future through this academic partnership, Shelby County leadership and commissioners have just successfully championed a remarkable \$500 million commitment to build new state-of-the-art hospital facilities in support of this effort.
- [Methodist Le Bonheur Health System](#) (MLH) – integrated, not-for-profit healthcare system based in Memphis. MLH has four Memphis Metro adult hospitals, including Methodist University Hospital, Methodist North Hospital, Methodist South Hospital, and Methodist Le Bonheur Germantown Hospital. The MLH network has two additional hospitals, Methodist Olive Branch Hospital and a specialty pediatric hospital, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital. UT Health Sciences is actively renewing the MLH and UT Health Sciences partnership.
 - [Methodist University Hospital](#) – a 617-bed facility including a nationally renowned joint transplant institute.
 - [Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital](#) – a 311-bed US News Top Children’s Hospital and Level 1 pediatric trauma center with UT academic pediatricians as the majority of providers. The new Chair of Pediatrics at UT Health Sciences will be expected to also serve as the Pediatrician-in-Chief at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital.
- [Baptist Memorial Hospital](#) – a 706-bed flagship hospital of Baptist Memorial Health Care and tertiary care referral center, with 65,000 emergency department visits and 12,000 surgeries per year. The East Memphis 80-acre campus is also home to Baptist Memorial Hospital for Women, the Spence and Becky Wilson Baptist Children’s Hospital, Baptist Memorial Restorative Care Hospital, Baptist Heart Institute, and Baptist Women’s Health Center.
- [Memphis Veteran’s Affairs Health System](#) – a 244-bed hospital serves 196,000 veterans in a 53-county area in western Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and east Arkansas since 1922. The VAMC has excellent facilities and core resources.
- [St. Francis Hospital](#) – was the first full-service facility in the West Tennessee area. Its 42-acre campus is home to a 479-bed hospital, two medical office buildings, and the University of Tennessee/Saint Francis Family Practice Residency Building.

- [St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital](#) – one of the preeminent hospitals in the United States, St. Jude’s providers treat the toughest childhood cancers and pediatric diseases. There are multiple synergies in graduate training programs.
- [UT Medical Center - Knoxville](#) - As the region’s academic medical center, Magnet® recognized hospital, and Level I Trauma Center, the University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC) serves as a referral center for Eastern Tennessee, Southeastern Kentucky, and Western North Carolina. The 710-bed hospital is also home to the region’s only dedicated Heart Hospital, adult and pediatric transplant center, the region’s first certified comprehensive stroke center, a private neonatal intensive care unit, and serves as a regional perinatal center.
- [Erlanger - Chattanooga](#) - Erlanger is a non-profit health system based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, affiliated with the University of Tennessee Health Sciences College of Medicine. The 800+ bed seven-hospital system includes the region’s only Level I Trauma Center, children’s hospital, Level IV NICU, kidney transplant center, 24/7 stroke care, and many more essential services. Children’s Hospital at Erlanger provides the highest level of trauma, critical, and inpatient care. Erlanger is the sole provider of tertiary care services spanning a 50,000 square-mile region.
- [Ascension Saint Thomas – Nashville](#) – Ascension Saint Thomas is a leading health care system, and the only faith-based, non-profit health system in Middle Tennessee, offering a highly comprehensive system of care, with more than 250 sites of care that cover a 45-county area in Tennessee consisting of 16 hospitals and a network of affiliated joint ventures, medical practices, clinics and specialty facilities. Across the state, Ascension Saint Thomas and its partner organizations employ more than 13,000 dedicated associates. Ascension Saint Thomas is part of Ascension, one of the nation’s largest faith-based healthcare organizations with 35,000 affiliated providers and 140 hospitals, serving communities in 19 states and the District of Columbia.
- [West Tennessee Health Care – Jackson](#) - Headquartered in Jackson, Tennessee, the anchor hospital, Jackson-Madison Country General Hospital has 635 licensed beds houses centers of Excellence in Women and Children, West Tennessee Cancer Center, Emergency Services, Rehabilitation, and Tennessee Heart Center. The UT COM family medicine department has thrived at WTHC for over 40 years.

The University of Tennessee Health Sciences is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the University of Tennessee Health Sciences. 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 UTHS would supersede any conflicting information in this document.