

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER™

**Associate/Assistant Director, Center for Comparative Research
The University of Mississippi Medical Center
Jackson, Mississippi**

The mission of the University of Mississippi Medical Center is to improve the health and well-being of patients and the community through excellent training for health care professionals, engagement in innovative research and the delivery of state-of-the-art health care.

THE SEARCH

The University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) in Jackson, Mississippi, invites applications for the position of associate/assistant director of the Center for Comparative Research (CCR). The position serves as the institution's chief clinical veterinarian and reports to the CCR executive director. The incoming associate/assistant director will have the exciting opportunity to observe and learn from the current executive director prior to transitioning into the executive director role.

The associate/assistant director will serve as a key leader within CCR and UMMC, providing strategic veterinary oversight and support for the highly successful and growing research enterprise. They will actively support clinical and basic researchers in their work with animals, providing the resources they need while ensuring optimal execution and regulatory compliance. The associate/assistant director will proactively lead and oversee veterinary care, facilitate research by assisting with animal protocol development, and support facility optimization in a fast-growing center that plays a vital role to UMMC researchers.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of the document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER

The University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) is the state's only academic medical center, Level I Trauma Center, Children's Hospital, Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and offers a host of complex programs and services that the citizens of Mississippi can only find through UMMC. UMMC is the largest employer in Mississippi, with approximately 10,000 employees, three specialized hospitals with 697 beds, two community hospitals, up to 125 specialties, and an annual budget of approximately \$2 billion. Enrollment in all programs across seven health science schools—medicine, nursing, dentistry, health-related professions, graduate studies, population health, and pharmacy—is more than 3,000 students.

UMMC prides itself on its inclusive and collaborative culture and was voted "best place to work" for five years in a row by the Jackson Free Press. Diversity and inclusion are integral to the core vision of UMMC

and its three mission areas: healthcare, research, and education. A major goal of the Medical Center is to eliminate differences in Mississippians' health status based on race, geography, income, or social status.

In FY2020, UMMC received more than \$82 million in sponsored research funding with a strategic goal to continue to strengthen research programs. As an R1 university, UMMC stands at the highest research classification by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. UMMC believes that innovation is the lifeblood of an academic medical center, where new knowledge and the ways to apply it are discovered daily.

For more information, review [Unlimited Possibilities – University of Mississippi Medical Center Annual Report 2022-2023](#)

CENTER FOR COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

The Center for Comparative Research is the centrally administered organization responsible for caring for and maintaining research animals. It operates as the research-support entity for the university and provides the management and resources to maintain full accreditation by AAALAC International. The center has continuously maintained full AAALAC accreditation since 1997. The center's support functions include daily animal husbandry requirements, animal quarantine, and conditioning programs, animal surgical and anesthetic support, laboratory animal veterinary medical care programs, and regulatory support (IACUC, OLAW, USDA). The CCR supports and oversees 20,000 rodents and approximately 100 non-human primates at any given time, with additional oversight of catfish, rabbits, guinea pigs, frogs, and zebrafish. The center's animal population has grown 30 percent over the past five years.

Facilities The CCR operates and maintains over 70,000 square feet of animal housing and support space across five major animal vivarium environments. These environments include animal housing areas, animal husbandry support spaces, and veterinary medical support facilities. Other specialized environments include neuroscience study areas, aquatic facilities, surgical modeling, and areas for biohazardous containment.

Staff The CCR is overseen by the executive director, who has five direct reports: the manager of the animal facilities lab, the director of research operations, a clinical veterinarian, and two certified veterinary technicians. In addition, the CCR staffs a supervisor of comparative research, an animal lab associate, an equipment/services coordinator, a lab animal purchasing specialist, and 14 animal lab technicians.

THE ROLE

In addition to their role as one of the center's clinical veterinarians, the successful candidate will manage the veterinary care program, maintain animal health surveillance programs, serve as a voting member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and help to develop and refine animal care and use programs. The associate/assistant director will also educate and train animal care personnel, laboratory technicians, and investigators. The successful candidate will also be eligible for a faculty appointment in a discipline commensurate with education and experience.

Responsibilities & Duties

- Provide clinical veterinary care in support of the institution's biomedical animal research mission.
- Manage the continuing health-monitoring program.
- Facilitate the advancement and growth of the anesthesia and surgical support functions of the CCR.
- Engage with key support entities of the institution, including Facilities Services, Environmental Health & Safety, Occupational Health Services, Office of Integrity and Compliance, etc., to ensure appropriate resources for the CCR.
- Serve as a voting member of the IACUC and fully participate in committee functions.
- Serve in an advisory role to university research scientists in model development, technical training, and problem-solving.
- Provide direct supervision and oversight of veterinary technicians.
- Assist in leading the animal care program, including maintaining a strong working relationship with facility management.
- Assist in training programs associated with the institution's animal care and use program, including CCR and IACUC training.
- Rotate in after-hours, weekend, and holiday on-call services.
- Assist the department administration in overall guidance and leadership, including personnel and budgetary management, short—and long-term planning, and interactions with accrediting and regulatory bodies.
- Collaborate with the executive director to oversee the institution's animal care and use program, including a continual vision for growth, expansion, and development.
- Perform other incidental duties as noted by the Executive Director and/or Institutional Official.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Specific opportunities and challenges for the associate/assistant director include:

Assist and learn from the current executive director of the Center for Comparative Research to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

The associate/assistant director will observe and shadow Dr. Andrew Grady, the executive director of CCR, as part of a succession plan that would coincide with Dr. Grady's retirement planned for late 2025. The associate/assistant director must learn all aspects of the CCR, including administrative, operational, facility, and animal care, to support the continued excellence of UMMC research pursuits.

Cultivate collaborative relationships and partnerships across UMMC.

The associate/assistant director will serve in a multi-faceted role that requires knowledge and expertise in laboratory animal medicine to support a highly esteemed research institute. To this end, the associate/assistant director must function collaboratively and maintain close working relationships with various departments, principal investigators, and committees. The associate/assistant director will bring

expertise and leadership experience to work broadly across and between the IACUC, the Animal Welfare Office, principal investigators, and others, ensuring a culture of collaboration, compliance, safety, and success.

Support and contribute to a growing research enterprise.

UMMC is leading the way in discoveries that improve the lives and communities of Mississippians and beyond as it forges a path toward “a healthier Mississippi.” In FY2023, UMMC received \$96 million in sponsored funds through 311 awards. The CCR is an integral facet of the research enterprise at UMMC as it works with over 100 principal investigators and animal protocols daily. Through UMMC’s recruitment efforts, the CCR collaborates with more prolific principal investigators each year. UMMC has shown continued support for the CCR’s success; over the last three years, UMMC has provided supplemental funding of \$2,165,444, equaling an average of \$721,814 per year. In 2018, UMMC supported developing and completing the Translational Research Center, which directly influenced the CCR operation and scale. Since then, UMMC has supported the investment of multiple new animal caging systems, a zebrafish core, and new personnel to support the CCR’s exciting growth. In addition, UMMC has provided continual support and resources for the CCR through its commitment to AAALAC International Accreditation.

UMMC has seen exciting growth in many areas, including the Cancer Center and Research Institute (CCRI). With the appointment of a new director in 2023, the CCRI has enhanced its mission through UMMC’s three-part mission of clinical care, research, and education. It has set a goal of obtaining a National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation in the next five years. The CCRI is predicted to recruit 10 new research faculty in the upcoming 18 months, directly influencing the number of animal protocols at the CCR. While these are welcome developments as they enhance the impact of the university on the lives of people in Mississippi and beyond, additional researchers and animals create space and resource demands. CCR leadership must be convincing and creative, advocating for needs and finding solutions while serving the evolving needs of a growing group of PIs and continuing to provide top-level service in a safe and healthy environment for people and animals.

Foster research excellence through exceptional animal care.

The associate/assistant director must understand the value, importance, and challenges of supporting world-class researchers while meeting the regulatory and accreditation requirements of a complex laboratory animal care center. As a voting member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the CCR and the associate/assistant director will ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The associate/assistant director will provide input, consultation, and assistance on protocol development and review.

In addition to administrative responsibilities, the associate/assistant director acts as a chief clinical veterinarian and must maintain the utmost priority and ethics surrounding all aspects of animal care and surveillance. The associate/assistant director will be responsible for training and mentoring two clinical veterinarians, two certified veterinary technicians, fourteen lab animal technicians, post-doctoral

students, research fellows, and principal investigators to ensure that animal safety is preserved in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Maximize the full potential of current facilities while evaluating and assessing future growth strategies.

As the research enterprise at UMMC continues to grow, so does the conversation about effectively utilizing space and facilities to support this growth. Most CCR's vivarium facilities currently stretch across three buildings, encompassing 70,000 square feet of animal housing and support space. In response to the growing research projects and principal investigators at UMMC, a committee has been formed to assess and evaluate the current vivarium space and propose strategic changes to increase efficiencies moving forward. The associate/assistant director will assist in the assessment of research facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and resources, including capacity, structure, and quality, to improve maintenance and evaluate future sustainable development of space, core facilities, and equipment.

In addition to evaluating the current functional space, discussions around vivarium development will be necessary. UMMC is evaluating underutilized vivarium space to identify viable solutions to increase facilities. The Cancer Center and Research Institute at UMMC also provides additional opportunities to strategically grow vivarium space as discussions around expanding their space begin.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will have a DVM and be board-certified or board-eligible by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM). Experience with rodent and non-human primate husbandry, handling, and clinical knowledge are required. Position title (associate or assistant) and rank will be commensurate with education and experience. The successful hire will possess many of the qualifications and characteristics below:

- Some experience in a supervisory capacity, preferably as a senior manager;
- Knowledge of current federal and state regulations pertaining to research conduct and administration of the IACUC;
- Prior experience working with and supporting a complex and diverse scientific mission;
- Knowledge of AAALAC International accreditation standards and processes;
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills using scientific and clinical laboratory animal health terminology;
- Specialized knowledge of laboratory animal species used to support research at CCR and the ability to train and mentor others to properly care for research animals and ethically utilize them in an experimental setting;
- Ability to troubleshoot and problem-solve;
- This position requires daily monitoring of operation, including after business hours and on weekends and holidays.

TO APPLY

Inquiries, nominations, and applications (a resume and letter of interest) may be directed online and in confidence to:

Greg Esposito, Partner
Kristin Benoit, Associate
Victoria Castillo, Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-mississippi-medical-center/associateassistant-director-center-comparative>

The University of Mississippi Medical Center provides equal opportunity in any employment practice, education program, or education activity to all qualified persons. The Medical Center complies with all applicable laws regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action and does not unlawfully discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment based upon race, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or genetic information.

APPENDIX

LEADERSHIP

Lee Bidwell, PhD was appointed associate vice chancellor for research on July 1, 2023. In this role, he supports oversight of the Medical Center's research mission and is responsible for enhancing basic, clinical, and population research. He also serves as professor and chief of the Neurology Basic Science Research Division and interim associate/assistant director of basic science research for the Cancer Center and Research Institute. His funded research projects focus on developing new treatments for stroke, diseases of the eye, chronic kidney disease, and pregnancy disorders without risking harm to the developing fetus. Dr. Bidwell has been at UMMC since 2002. Since earning a PhD in biochemistry and completing a postdoctoral fellowship in biochemistry, he has held roles at every level, providing him with a broad perspective of the research conducted at the Medical Center while fostering a deep appreciation for the research mission and a desire to see it grow.

Andrew W. Grady, DVM, is the executive director of the Center for Comparative Research. Dr. Grady was recruited to UMMC in 1993. He was tasked with achieving AAALAC accreditation within five years. Since then, he has instituted comprehensive programs and structures to address programmatic deficiencies. In 1997, Dr. Grady successfully oversaw AAALAC accreditation and has maintained full accreditation by AAALAC since. Dr. Grady has been instrumental in continuously improving the programs and delivery of services to UMMC scientists, providing necessary skilled training, diagnostic services, animal model development, and regulatory guidance. Dr. Grady has remained deeply involved in the AAALAC accreditation process, serving as a member of the AAALAC council since 2004 and as an Assistant Section Leader, Section Leader, Vice President, and President.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The University of Mississippi School of Medicine boasts faculty and staff considered leaders in their fields, esteemed educators and mentors, innovative researchers, and compassionate caregivers. UMMC is the state's only academic health sciences center, with schools in medicine, nursing, health-related professions, dentistry, population health, and graduate studies. The School of Medicine is the driver behind UMMC research. The expanding research mission uses various laboratory animal species in numerous disciplines, including hypertension and cardiovascular dynamics, obesity and related diseases, cancer biology and treatment, chemical dependency, and broad neuroscience applications.

A special act of the Board of Trustees created the School of Medicine in 1903. It operated continuously as a two-year school on the Oxford campus for over half a century. In the summer of 1955, the school was moved to the state capital, Jackson, and expanded to include the third and fourth years. The first class graduated in June 1957. The School of Medicine is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

UMMC's overall goal of a healthier Mississippi is only possible with the help of men and women entrusted to train the next generation of Mississippi's medical doctors. The School of Medicine's comprehensive

academic program is designed to create a physician workforce to address health disparities, develop lifelong learners, contribute to biomedical research, and utilize technology to improve patient care and health outcomes. These goals support UMMC and the School of Medicine's mission of creating a healthier Mississippi.

University Physicians, the faculty group practice of the School of Medicine, includes about 500 doctors, many of them among leaders in their field, who care for patients in the hospitals and clinics on campus, around the Jackson metro area, and in outreach clinics around the state. Additionally, they have a collaborative relationship with the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center. In the 2022-2023 academic year, the School of Medicine enrolled 657 students, including residents/fellows.

JACKSON, MS

Jackson – Mississippi's state capital, is considered a big city with a small-town feel. With the slogan, "The City with Soul," Jackson is home to rich arts and history, architecture, outdoor recreation, sporting events, and vast culinary offerings. Jackson's population is 166,965, and it is located with easy access to major destination cities across the south and southwest. Jackson is also adjacent to some of the top school districts in the state. Jackson has been a major player in pivotal historical moments, particularly during the Civil Rights Movement. It is home to the first public school for African-American students, now the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center, recognized as one of CNN's 50 States 50 Spots to See. Additional historic landmarks include the Farish Street Historic District, Alamo Theater, and Johnny T's (formerly The Crystal Palace Night Club). Downtown Jackson is a hub of culinary talent with nearly forty restaurants and nightlife spots. UMMC is in the heart of downtown and is an integral part of the Jackson community, representing 10% of Jackson's economy.