



Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer

Leadership Profile

August 2026

Prepared by April Allen, Diane Smith, M.P.H, B.S.N., and Jeff Schroetlin



Contents

The Opportunity	1
Organization Overview	2
Position Summary	4
Goals and Objectives	5
Candidate Qualifications	6
The Community	7
Procedure for Candidacy	8

The Opportunity

UK St. Claire HealthCare seeks a dynamic, strategic, and forward-thinking executive to serve as its next Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). This is a unique opportunity to join one of Kentucky's most respected and financially strong community health systems at a time of continued growth, clinical advancement, and deeper integration with the University of Kentucky. Serving as the senior nursing executive for the organization, the CNO will play a vital role in shaping care delivery, enhancing quality outcomes, advancing workforce initiatives, and driving the strategic direction of nursing across the enterprise.

Headquartered in Morehead, Kentucky, UK St. Claire HealthCare serves an 11-county region across northeastern Kentucky and is anchored by UK St. Claire Regional Medical Center, a 159-bed hospital recognized as the largest rural hospital in the region. The health system includes a broad network of primary care and specialty practices, urgent care centers, outpatient services, home health, hospice, and ancillary service lines, providing comprehensive care to a largely rural and Appalachian population. As the region's leading healthcare provider and one of its largest employers, UK St. Claire plays a critical role in improving access, advancing population health, and supporting the economic vitality of the communities it serves.

Reporting directly to the President and CEO and serving as a key member of the executive leadership team, the CNO provides strategic and operational oversight for nursing services across the health system. The role is responsible for ensuring excellence in nursing practice, patient safety, quality, regulatory compliance, workforce engagement, professional development, and patient experience. The CNO partners closely with physician leaders, operational executives, and frontline caregivers to create a culture of accountability, collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The successful candidate will lead initiatives that strengthen nursing recruitment and retention, succession planning, leadership development, and employee engagement while maintaining a relentless focus on quality outcomes and patient-centered care. The CNO will champion evidence-based practice, support clinical innovation, and promote a highly reliable care environment that consistently meets regulatory and accreditation standards. Additionally, the role oversees nursing-related budgets and resource allocation, balancing financial stewardship with investments in people, technology, and care delivery improvements.

This position offers an opportunity to influence healthcare delivery well beyond the walls of the hospital. The next CNO will help shape the future of nursing for a regional health system that serves as a critical healthcare resource for rural eastern Kentucky, leveraging academic partnerships, advancing workforce development, and ensuring access to exceptional care for the communities that depend on UK St. Claire every day.

Organization Overview

UK St. Claire is a leading rural healthcare system serving Northeastern Kentucky and is one of the region's most significant employers. Founded on July 1, 1963, as a 41-bed acute care hospital with just nine nurses and six physicians representing three specialties, the organization has evolved into a comprehensive integrated health system dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the communities it serves.

Today, UK St. Claire employs more than 1,650 team members and is supported by a growing medical staff of more than 200 physicians and nearly 102 advanced practice providers representing over 35 specialties. The system includes the largest rural hospital in Northeastern Kentucky, seven primary care practices across five counties, a multi-specialty medical pavilion, two urgent care centers, a pediatrics clinic, outpatient services, a retail pharmacy, counseling center, and medical equipment and supply store. UK St. Claire also provides home health and hospice services across eight counties within its broader 11-county service region. All services are accredited by The Joint Commission, reflecting the organization's commitment to quality, safety, and patient-centered care.

The organization's roots are deeply connected to the vision and determination of Dr. Claire Louise Caudill, a pioneering physician who returned to her hometown of Morehead in 1947 to care for residents throughout the region. Recognizing the lack of local healthcare resources, Dr. Caudill championed the creation of a community hospital, working alongside the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Eastern Kentucky Hospital Foundation, and local leaders to bring that vision to reality. The hospital was ultimately named in her honor, recognizing her lifelong commitment to rural healthcare and her estimated delivery of more than 8,000 babies during her career.

A Catholic, not-for-profit healthcare organization sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame, UK St. Claire has maintained a longstanding affiliation with the University of Kentucky since its inception. This partnership has expanded access to specialty care, strengthened educational and training opportunities for healthcare professionals, and reinforced the system's commitment to clinical excellence and innovation. Over the decades, strategic expansions and investments in services, facilities, and community-based care have enabled UK St. Claire to meet the evolving healthcare needs of the region.

Today, UK St. Claire is recognized as a trusted regional healthcare leader, combining advanced medical services with a mission-driven commitment to compassionate, high-quality care. Its legacy of service, strong community ties, and partnership with the University of Kentucky position the organization to continue advancing healthcare access and outcomes across Eastern Kentucky.

Mission, Vision, Values, and Philosophy

Mission

To proclaim God's goodness through a healing ministry to the people of Eastern Kentucky.

Vision

Dedicated to a Catholic Christian healing ministry, UK St. Claire, in partnership with its healthcare providers, strives to be a trusted healthcare organization and employer distinguished by:

- Providing clinical and service excellence in a personalized manner.
- Building a leading integrated medical community that offers a seamless system of care and education.
- Enhancing the quality of life of individuals and communities by promoting physical, spiritual, social, and emotional well-being.

Core Values

- **Dignity:** Because life is a sacred gift from God, we treat each person with courtesy and respect. Christian values guide our decisions and characterize our relationships.
- **Compassion:** Our ministry touches the core of life; therefore, we provide service with heartfelt care and concern for patients, families, and one another.
- **Excellence:** We deliver high-quality service in a professional and sensitive manner, valuing every facet of human life and continuously seeking to improve our ministry through our talents and skills.
- **Commitment:** Rooted in a deep spiritual heritage, we are dedicated to improving the health of communities, especially the poor and underserved, while using resources responsibly and with integrity.
- **Collaboration:** We address challenges, develop programs, and provide services through cooperation and teamwork with colleagues, physicians, community partners, and others involved in healthcare.

Philosophy

As a Catholic, not-for-profit healthcare ministry, UK St. Claire is guided by the belief that God is the giver of life. This philosophy is expressed through the hearts and hands of those who serve throughout the organization.

UK St. Claire is committed to:

- Respecting and valuing every stage of human life from conception through natural death.
- Providing quality care in a professional, compassionate manner that upholds the dignity of every individual.
- Addressing the physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychosocial needs of the whole person.
- Supporting the poor, vulnerable, and underserved throughout the communities it serves.
- Fostering education, research, and the advancement of healthcare knowledge.
- Stewarding personal, financial, and technological resources responsibly for the benefit of patients and communities.
- Promoting collaboration, growth, and innovation in support of its healing mission.

Through these guiding principles, UK St. Claire remains dedicated to delivering exceptional care while improving the health and well-being of Eastern Kentucky.

About UK HealthCare (UKHC)

UK HealthCare (UKHC) is the integrated academic health system of the University of Kentucky and serves as the Commonwealth's leading provider of advanced, specialty, and quaternary care. Recognized nationally for clinical excellence, UK HealthCare includes a Level I Trauma Center, an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and more than 80 specialty clinics and 140 outreach programs. The system is staffed by over 9,000 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, researchers, and allied health professionals dedicated to delivering exceptional, patient-centered care while advancing research, education, and innovation throughout Kentucky.

As the healthcare enterprise of the University of Kentucky, UK HealthCare combines the strengths of a nationally respected academic medical center with a commitment to improving the health of communities across the state. Consistently ranked among the top hospitals in Kentucky by *U.S. News & World Report*, UK HealthCare is recognized for treating the most complex medical conditions while training the next generation of healthcare professionals. Through its longstanding affiliation with UK St. Claire, the organization expands access to specialized care, clinical expertise, education, and resources that enhance healthcare delivery throughout Eastern Kentucky.

Position Summary

The Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer provides executive leadership, strategic direction, and accountability for nursing practice across the organization, ensuring the delivery of high-quality, safe, and patient-centered care. This leader establishes and advances professional practice standards, develops and implements nursing policies and procedures, and ensures compliance with all regulatory and accreditation requirements. Through collaboration with interdisciplinary leaders, the role aligns nursing practice with the organization's mission, vision, values, and strategic objectives while fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The Chief Nursing Officer creates an environment that promotes professional growth, staff engagement, and shared decision-making, empowering nursing teams to actively participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of patient care. By providing oversight of nursing operations, quality outcomes, workforce development, and professional practice initiatives, the role ensures consistent standards of care, enhances patient outcomes, and supports the organization's commitment to exceptional clinical and service excellence.

Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, this role has nine direct reports and oversees a total of 450 FTEs.

Essential Functions

The successful Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer candidate will:

- Manage and lead nursing practice, education, research, professional development, and nursing services.
- Design and implement programs and processes to support the hospital's mission, goals, and strategic plan.
- Demonstrate knowledge of advances in nursing practice and participate in professional development activities.
- Ensure compliance with patient safety standards and evidence-based safety initiatives, maintaining regulatory accreditation.
- Develop, prepare, and monitor departmental budgets and resources, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and cost awareness.
- Lead, coach, and support staff, fostering a positive work environment focused on retention, productivity, and patient-family centered care.
- Participate in strategic planning, decision-making, and policy development as a member of the senior leadership team.
- Coordinate patient services functions with other departments and oversee the development and implementation of patient care programs, policies, and procedures.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been identified as priorities for this position:

- Assess and strengthen the nursing workforce strategy, including recruitment, retention, succession planning, and professional development initiatives to ensure a stable, engaged, and high-performing nursing team across the system.
- Advance a culture of quality, safety, and accountability by partnering with clinical and operational leaders to improve nursing-sensitive indicators, patient outcomes, regulatory readiness, and Joint Commission performance.
- Enhance patient, family, and caregiver experience by fostering a culture of service excellence that reflects UK St. Claire's mission, values, and commitment to personalized, compassionate care.
- Strengthen clinical integration and partnerships with UK HealthCare, leveraging academic resources, specialty expertise, and best practices to enhance care delivery, nursing practice, and access to advanced services throughout the region.
- Collaborate with physicians, operational leaders, and frontline staff to optimize care delivery models, improve patient throughput and capacity management, and ensure efficient utilization of nursing resources across inpatient and ambulatory settings.
- Promote nursing excellence and leadership development by evaluating nursing structures, governance processes, and professional practice programs while creating pathways for leadership growth, engagement, and clinical advancement.
- Serve as a visible, mission-driven leader who builds trust with staff, providers, and community stakeholders while reinforcing UK St. Claire's Catholic heritage and commitment to improving the health of Eastern Kentucky's rural communities.



Candidate Qualifications

Education/Certification

- A nursing degree from an accredited college or university is required; a master's degree in nursing or related field is required
- Eligible for a current and unencumbered license with the Kentucky State Board of Nursing
- Must attain the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Nurse Executive Advanced Certificate within two years in the position

Knowledge, Work Experience and Leadership Skills

- Minimum of 15 years of progressive leadership experience in nursing
- Proven expertise in evidence-based practices and a working knowledge of contemporary best practices in nursing
- Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to self-motivate, manage multiple priorities, make sound decisions, and meet deadlines in a dynamic environment
- Operationally and financially astute; able to evaluate care models, performance metrics, and clinical workflows and lead improvements that enhance quality and efficiency
- Track record of building strong, trust-based relationships with leaders, staff, and interdisciplinary partners to advance patient satisfaction, quality outcomes, and service excellence
- Demonstrated success in recruitment, retention, and development of clinical and non-clinical staff, while balancing operational performance and growth
- Knowledge and experience with digital technology that support operational effectiveness, consumer engagement, analytics, virtual care, and population health initiatives
- Strong planning and project management skills, with the agility to adapt to evolving priorities and system needs
- Exceptional communication skills, including written, verbal, and active listening capabilities
- Highly organized, adaptable, and results-oriented, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and meet deadlines effectively.

The Community

Morehead, Kentucky

Morehead is a vibrant and growing community in northeastern Kentucky that serves as the county seat of Rowan County. Situated along Interstate 64 between Lexington, Kentucky, and Huntington, West Virginia, Morehead offers residents and visitors a unique blend of higher education, outdoor recreation, healthcare services, and economic opportunity. The city serves as a regional hub for commerce, education, and tourism throughout eastern Kentucky.



Home to Morehead State University (MSU), the city enjoys the energy and cultural amenities of a college town while maintaining the welcoming character and affordability of a close-knit community. MSU contributes significantly to the local economy and workforce development through nationally recognized academic programs, research initiatives, and partnerships with regional employers. The university is particularly noted for its programs in space science, healthcare, business, and education.

Morehead is surrounded by some of Kentucky's most beautiful natural resources. The area serves as a gateway to Cave Run Lake, often referred to as the "Muskie Capital of the South," and the Daniel Boone National Forest, providing exceptional opportunities for boating, fishing, hiking, camping, rock climbing, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. These attractions draw visitors from across the region and support a thriving tourism and hospitality sector.

The community has demonstrated a strong commitment to economic growth and innovation. Local leaders, the Morehead–Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, the Rowan County Economic Development Council, and educational institutions work collaboratively to attract new investment, support entrepreneurship, and develop a skilled workforce. Recent initiatives have focused on advanced manufacturing, healthcare expansion, technology development, and workforce training to ensure continued growth and prosperity.

Residents benefit from an excellent quality of life characterized by affordable housing, quality healthcare services, strong public schools, and a safe, family-friendly environment. The city's downtown district continues to evolve with locally owned businesses, restaurants, community events, and cultural attractions that contribute to its vibrant character. Annual festivals, arts programs, and recreational events strengthen community engagement and celebrate the region's Appalachian heritage.

Procedure for Candidacy

Please direct all applications, nominations and inquiries to the WittKieffer consultants assisting UK St. Claire with this recruitment, preferably via e-mail, to dsmith@wittkieffer.com or by phone, 267-766-0410.

Please direct all nominations and applications to Diane Smith and April Allen through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at www.wittkieffer.com and selecting the "Become a Candidate" button.

Diane Smith Principal <u>dsmith@wittkieffer.com</u>	April Allen Principal <u>aallen@wittkieffer.com</u>
---	---

UK St. Claire complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. UK St. Claire does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. This material has been copied, compiled, or quoted in part from UK St. Claire documents and personal interviews and is believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern.

All images and logos used in this leadership profile were attained from UK St. Claire and/or are owned by Witt/Kieffer Inc. via Getty Images.



WittKieffer is the premier executive search and advisory firm developing inclusive, impactful leadership teams for organizations that improve quality of life. For more than 50 years, we have operated exclusively at the intersection of not-for-profit and for-profit healthcare delivery, science, and education – the Quality of Life Ecosystem. Through our expert executive search services as well as our Professional Search, Interim Leadership, and Leadership Advisory solutions, we strengthen organizations that make the world better.

Visit [WittKieffer.com](https://www.WittKieffer.com) to learn more.

WittKieffer