



School of Nursing Director

Leadership Profile

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WittKieffer

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The Opportunity

Northern Kentucky University (NKU), a growing metropolitan and public university on a thriving suburban campus near Cincinnati invites applications and nominations for a visionary and strategic leader to serve as the School of Nursing Director.

Northern Kentucky University (NKU) seeks excellence by enriching its educational environment and culture through the diversity of its administration, faculty, and staff and by embracing inclusiveness, equity, and global awareness in all dimensions of its work. They encourage applications by members of all groups and by persons with a demonstrated commitment to belonging and experience in achieving goals relative to institutional excellence. Their vision is that NKU will be nationally recognized for being a student-ready, regionally engaged university that empowers diverse learners for economic and social mobility. They will do this while promoting a culture of excellence, acting with integrity, fostering a community of belonging, working with creativity and innovation, and maintaining a climate of collegiality.

The Director reports directly to the Dean of the College of Health & Human Services, Dr. Gannon Tagher, and is responsible for all aspects of administration including strategic planning and vision, oversight and implementation of academic programs and supporting development efforts for the School of Nursing. This is an exciting time for the school to continue building programs and prepare for the future of nursing and healthcare where technology and new teaching methodologies are changing the landscape of higher education. The new Director will build on the current success of the school and its faculty to become a widely recognized national leader in nursing education. The new director will be a visionary and intellectual leader in the nursing field who can bring diverse groups of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and university and community partners together to advance the school and its global health impact. This role will be expected to ensure that students who interact with the Director have a high-quality experience that supports the vision of the institution.

The successful candidate will have an earned doctorate from a regionally accredited institution with at least one graduate degree in nursing and a record of achievement in teaching, scholarship, and service. Demonstrated support for excellence and innovation in undergraduate and graduate nursing education is essential. The Director is expected to embrace and advance nursing education, research, and service to prepare and empower future nurses to confront the healthcare demands of a complex and technologically advanced society.

Established in 1968, Northern Kentucky University provides a dynamic setting for engaged learning to approximately 16,000 students. More than 80 percent of NKU graduates stay in the greater Cincinnati area, creating a talent pipeline with expertise and skills that align with high-demand fields. NKU has been recognized for its community engagement and partnerships that contribute to the economic and social vitality of the region. The College of Health & Human Services encompasses the following academic units: Allied Health, Nursing, Kinesiology, Counseling, and Rehabilitative Sciences, Social Work, and the internationally accredited Center of Simulation Education.

The national executive search firm WittKieffer has been retained to assist Northern Kentucky University in this search. For information regarding candidacy, nominations, or other suggestions, please see the section entitled "Procedure for Candidacy" near the conclusion of this document.

Organization Overview

NKU is located only seven miles southeast of Cincinnati in the quiet suburb of Highland Heights, Kentucky. NKU is a leader in Greater Cincinnati, Kentucky and the nation as a student-ready university, meeting students where they are in their educational journeys — no matter where they are.

Professors know the students' names and NKU has been recognized worldwide as a top innovative university and around the region as a leader in return on investment.

It all began in 1946 at the Trailways Bus Station in Covington, Kentucky. A handful of students and instructors participated in classes offered through the University of Kentucky's educational extension services. The students were secretaries, recent high school graduates, and World War II veterans on the G.I. Bill. These students took a variety of courses, including beginning math, typing, first-year business classes, and English. The instructors were area high school teachers.

In the years that followed, a bipartisan group of members of the Northern Kentucky community lobbied for a new institution, which paved the way for the creation of Northern Kentucky State College in 1968. Just a year later, more than 1,000 students were enrolled as the institution began to prepare for a move to its new home in Highland Heights. The campus grew quickly, soon adding a law school and a residential village.

In 1976, the institution became a university. The campus continued to expand, with enrollment topping 8,000 students in 1980 and 10,000 students less than a decade later. Year after year, the University responded to increasing student demand by establishing new academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including the doctoral degree.

The 1990s saw unprecedented community engagement and new strategic partnerships, all of which brought national recognition to the University for its contribution to the economic and social vitality of the Northern Kentucky region. NKU would become a perennial member of the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. And when the Carnegie Foundation created a new designation for community engagement, NKU would be part of its inaugural class.

The students also excelled in athletics, bringing home three NCAA Division II national championships in the first decade of the 21st century – women's basketball titles in 2000 and 2008 as well as a men's soccer crown in 2010. With new facilities, the University envisioned a transition to the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, and we began the reclassification as an NCAA Division I institution in 2012.

From its first days, NKU would be a place where faculty and staff put students at the center of learning and made student success their life's work. This University is a place where the flame within each student is fueled and the dream within each person is realized.

Mission

Northern Kentucky University delivers innovative, student-centered education and engages in impactful scholarly and creative endeavors, all of which empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives, while contributing to the economic, civic, and social vitality of the region.

Vision

NKU will be nationally recognized for being a student-ready, regionally engaged university that empowers diverse learners for economic and social mobility.

Core Values

- We will promote a culture that fosters and celebrates excellence in all that we do.
- We will engage in honest, fair, and ethical behavior with integrity at the heart of every decision and action.
- We will foster a community of belonging by embracing equity, diversity, and inclusiveness.
- We will approach our work—how we teach, engage and serve—with creativity and innovation.
- We will maintain a climate of collegiality built on respect and characterized by open communication and shared responsibility.

School of Nursing Mission

Consistent with the mission and values of NKU and CHHS, the School of Nursing empowers students to advocate for the well-being of all communities through an innovative, evidence-based learning environment that fosters excellence in academics, scholarship, engagement, practice, leadership and lifelong learning.

School of Nursing graduates are placed at hospitals, schools, and organizations all over the tri-state area and also nationally. The School of Nursing is dedicated to student success by providing many opportunities for learning-by-doing while at NKU. Many courses incorporate service-learning, where students pair with local organizations to work on real-world problems that impact health outcomes in the Northern Kentucky region.

Preparing students with skills needed to attain their dream of becoming a nurse is at the core of the mission. At NKU, students receive invaluable experiences outside the classroom through our **state-of-the-art simulation center**, laboratory facilities and clinical placements. Small classes, provide a curriculum that offers essential, evidence-based knowledge and skills to deliver practical, ethical, inter-professional caregiving that improves and saves lives.

Leadership

Cady Short-Thompson, Ph.D.



Dr. Cady Short-Thompson currently serves as the seventh president of Northern Kentucky University. With a background in communication and 25 years of experience in higher education as an award-winning professor and academic leader, Dr. Short-Thompson began her tenure as president in October 2023.

Her presidency is a return home to NKU as Dr. Short-Thompson began her career at Northern Kentucky University in 1996 as a professor of communication and spent 14 years rising through the ranks as a graduate program director and department chair. In 2007, she was recognized with the Frank Sinton Milburn Outstanding Professor Award for her excellence in teaching, research and service. In her time teaching at NKU, she developed a love for scholarly teaching, a passion for student access and success, and a deep sense of student-centeredness.

Her presidential priorities have focused upon strategic enrollment management, strengthening finances, modernizing processes, engaging the region, and building institutional culture. She has led multiple efforts in planning—strategic enrollment management planning, housing improvement planning, Norse Network Hub planning, university strategic planning, and more.

Her first major initiative as president was Women for NKU, a program that launched in April 2024 and is enhancing the collective involvement and financial impact of women giving to the university. Women for NKU engages women of varied interests and accomplishments in the life of the university and encourages them to invest their time, talents and resources.

In August 2024, she oversaw the implementation of NKU's Direct Admit Program, which simplifies the undergraduate college admissions process by eliminating applications, fees and essays. The regionally revolutionary program removes the barrier to higher education by automatically admitting new, first-time freshmen with an unweighted high-school GPA of 2.75 or higher. By eliminating the formal application process, the university is able to work directly with students and families in supporting their transition to NKU.

The following month, in September 2024, Dr. Short-Thompson introduced a new undergraduate tuition program, dubbed 3 States, 1 Rate, that makes the cost of attending NKU more predictable and transparent. The model eliminates the confusion and complexity surrounding tuition by automatically qualifying new undergraduate students from Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana for in-state tuition at NKU regardless of their county of residence in those states.

President Short-Thompson serves on numerous regional boards, including the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, BE NKY Board of Directors, Holocaust and Humanity Center Board of Directors, Horizon League Board of Directors, Life Learning Center Board of Directors, OneNKY Alliance Board of Directors, United Way of Greater Cincinnati Board of Directors, and more.

Prior to beginning her presidency at Northern Kentucky University in 2023, Dr. Short-Thompson served for two years as the CEO and executive director of Breakthrough Cincinnati, an educational equity nonprofit organization that works with high need, high potential middle and high school students to prepare them for college and career success. From 2017 to 2021, she served as provost and professor at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. There, she nurtured high-quality academic programs, introduced new centers and student services, modernized processes, grew resources, improved assessment and accreditation compliance and supported diversity, equity and inclusion efforts for students, faculty and staff.

In 2010, Dr. Short-Thompson began her role as Dean of the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College (UCBA) where she served for seven years. During her time at UCBA, she built and led a team to re-envision the college; rename, reposition and rebrand it; significantly grow enrollments and resources; and most importantly, build a student-centered, inclusive and student-success-oriented culture. She served as the elected chair of the University of Cincinnati's Council of Deans, chair of the University of Cincinnati's Diversity Council, and chair of the state-level Inter University Council Regional Dean's Council, in addition to many other committees at the University of Cincinnati. She also founded the UC Smiles program – a partnership with Procter & Gamble and UCBA's dental hygiene program – to provide dental care for underserved youth in Cincinnati. In 2014, Dr. Short-Thompson was invited to participate in the first Academy of Innovative Higher Education Leadership; a select group of 24 senior leaders from universities across the United States who address some of the most pressing issues in higher education by learning from best practices in other industries.

Dr. Short-Thompson earned her B.A. (1991), M.A. (1992), and Ph.D. (1997) from the University of Cincinnati where she developed her academic expertise in political communication. Having lived in Cincinnati for five decades of her life, Dr. Short-Thompson is thrilled to lead Northern Kentucky University in her hometown, surrounded by her family and friends. She has been married to her husband, Steve Thompson, since 1992. They have three adult children, Alex, Skye and Seth.

Position Summary

The School of Nursing (SON) Director implements its strategic goals and objectives while providing direction and leadership to achieve the school's mission and goals as well as maintaining its values and philosophy. This position is an in-person position and is accountable for all activities in the School of Nursing.

Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the Dean, College of Health and Human Services, the Director, School of Nursing will be responsible for overseeing 42 full-time and 199 part-time faculty in the school supporting nearly 2700 students annually across all certificate and degree programs in nursing. The School of Nursing at Northern Kentucky University has been accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) since 2015.

Responsibilities

The successful Director of Nursing candidate will:

Leadership and General Administration

- Facilitates the development of the SON strategic plan and the progress toward attaining strategic goals, including enhancement of inter-professional education (IPE), accelerated online programs, graduate programming, and research.
- Facilitates administrative team meetings.
- Supervises, supports, evaluates, and guides the Associate Directors in the School of Nursing.
- Supports Associate Directors in maintaining high academic and professional standards.
- Facilitates research opportunities for faculty within the School of Nursing.
- Facilitates professional development opportunities for faculty within the School of Nursing.
- Facilitates School of Nursing meetings.
- Makes recommendations for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and termination to the Dean.
- Hires faculty in consultation with the Dean and Associate Directors of the SON.
- Supports Associate Directors in hiring adjunct faculty and staff.
- Serves on college Executive Leadership Council.
- Accountable for assessing and maintaining accreditation standards.
- Responsible for yearly reports to the Kentucky Board of Nursing, AACN, and NLN.
- Accountable for conflict resolution when elevated above the Associate Director level.

Coordination and Communication with the School, University and Community

- Ensures the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, School leadership, faculty, staff, and students are appropriately communicated with regarding all SON activities.
- Represents the School of Nursing in the community and national associations.
- Oversees public relations/publicity for the School of Nursing.
- Develops and sustains relationships with community partners.
- Works with university advancement to showcase the School of Nursing.
- Works with directors of the Nurse Advocacy Center for the Underserved and the Nursing and Interprofessional Research Collaborative to promote accomplishments to the University and community.

Management of Resources

- Oversees student fees in collaboration with Associate Directors.
- Facilitates the recruitment and orientation of faculty.
- Provides leadership and resources to faculty in pursuing research and scholarly activities in collaboration with the Associate Directors.
- Explores innovative ways to increase revenues to assist in fulfilling the School of Nursing's mission and goals.
- Accountable for the revenues and expenditures in the school budget.
- Provides input into the budgetary process for the SON for each fiscal year.

Teaching/Service/Research

- Participates in teaching courses according to specialty and availability, as able.
- Participates in scholarship according to specialty and interests, as able.
- Participates in University and community service as applicable.

Goals and Objectives

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

- Building on the School of Nursing's strong foundation, the Director will articulate a compelling vision and lead the development of a strategic plan that will ensure that the School continues to achieve excellence in education, scholarship, and service and it is viewed as a leader in nursing education and research regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Develop a vision for the School of Nursing that ensures continued success and viability for the future. Ensure that the mission and values of the organization are well articulated and supported.
- The Director will engage faculty in assessing the curriculum and identifying the changes, enhancements, and additions that should be made to address current demand and the emerging needs of a rapidly evolving healthcare environment.
- Promote and mentor faculty in their professional growth and development. The Director will engage faculty in developing additional programs, including exploring interdisciplinary programs with other departments and centers and with institutions in the region.
- The Director will invigorate the faculty, staff, students, and alumni through the creation of a vibrant vision for a distinguished and contemporary School of Nursing.
- Develop and implement a robust student success framework to positively impact student persistence and completion in each nursing program.
- The Director is expected to elevate the prominence of the School by actively participating in local, regional, state, and national healthcare and academic organizations (e.g., local hospitals, health departments, CCNE, AACN, and other accrediting bodies, professional nursing organizations).
- The Director is expected to be a prominent and effective advocate for the School within the college, university and the larger community.

Candidate Qualifications

Education/Certification

- Doctoral Degree from an accredited university in a related field is required. (Ed.D, Ph.D, DNP).
- Must possess an unencumbered current nursing license through the Kentucky and Ohio Boards of Nursing or be eligible for licensure.

Knowledge and Work Experience

- Current record of active research/scholarship, teaching and service commensurate with qualifications for tenure.
- A minimum of five years of nursing experience (including nursing education and/or nursing leadership) within the immediate past 7 years.
- Two or more years teaching experience in a pre-licensure nursing education and graduate programs within the last five-years.
- At least three years' experience holding an academic leadership position (e.g., department chair, program director, track coordinator).
- Experience with performance reviews and faculty development.
- Experience with institutional and programmatic accreditation requirements (CCNE, ACEN, CNEA) and nursing board criteria and regulatory standards governing nurse educational programs.
- Current knowledge of nursing practice and demonstrated experience or preparation in education that includes teaching adults, adult learning theory teaching methods, curriculum development, and curriculum evaluation.

Leadership Skills and Characteristics

- A passion for excellence: Believes in exceptional patient care, education, research, and service to the community.
- An executive of unquestioned integrity and moral character; an individual faculty can trust without reservation to represent their values.
- Highly professional and mature individual who is trustworthy and exemplifies honesty and integrity.
- An open, articulate, engaging, and participative leader who offers clarity of ideas and inspires respect and credibility. The candidate will generate enthusiasm and passion for this work.
- A self-motivated, approachable, and visible leader who has an open-door policy, who empowers others and fosters collaboration.
- A creative thinker who has an excellent understanding of the current academic and financial issues and how they affect a nursing school. Is skilled at developing innovative approaches.
- A well-organized, analytical, self-directed individual with excellent project and time management skills.
- Has superior oral and written communication skills including the ability to clearly and concisely convey business and financial issues to faculty and staff. Is an excellent listener who can relate to and connect with colleagues at all levels of the university.
- Brings demonstrated ability to build and sustain productive and collaborative relationships with a broad variety of key stakeholders across NKU and the community at large.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills with demonstrated ability to effectively communicate with new faculty, current faculty and academic leaders.
- Experienced leader with demonstrated leadership skills necessary to cultivate an environment of excellence and collaboration.
- Possess a high level of diplomacy and establish a culture of integrity.
- Understand the importance and concept of interprofessional education.

The Community

Greater Cincinnati

Cincinnati, city, seat of [Hamilton](#) county, southwestern [Ohio](#), U.S. It lies along the [Ohio River](#) opposite the suburbs of [Covington](#) and [Newport, Kentucky](#), 15 miles (24 km) east of the [Indiana](#) border and about 50 miles (80 km) southwest of [Dayton](#). Cincinnati is Ohio's third largest city, after [Columbus](#) and [Cleveland](#). Other suburban [communities](#) include Norwood and Forest Park in Ohio and Florence in Kentucky.

Picturesquely situated between the Little [Miami](#) and [Great Miami](#) rivers at their [confluences](#) with the Ohio, it is encircled by hills rising 400–600 feet (120–180 meters) above the river. It is the hub of a [metropolitan area](#) that includes portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky.\

Services (wholesale and [retail trade](#), government, education) [constitute](#) the main component of Cincinnati's economy. The city's highly diversified manufactures include food products, transportation equipment, soap products, chemicals, industrial machinery, pharmaceuticals, metal products, textiles, furniture, and cosmetics; printing is also important. The city remains a national transportation hub that includes one of the country's largest inland coal ports and an international airport located to the southwest in Kentucky.



A noted cultural center, Cincinnati has a [symphony orchestra](#) and ballet and theatre ensembles. The Cincinnati Opera, founded in 1920, is the second oldest opera company in the country. Cincinnati Museum Center, located in the renovated Union Terminal railway station, includes a children's museum and museums of history and of natural history and science. The Cincinnati Art Museum and Taft Museum of Art have noted collections. In 2003 the Contemporary Arts Center (founded in 1939 as the Modern Art Society) moved into a new building designed by [Zaha Hadid](#). The city is the seat of the [University of Cincinnati](#) (1819), the Cincinnati State Technical and [Community](#) College (1969), and the Union Institute and University (1964). There are two Roman Catholic institutes of higher education—[Xavier University](#) (1831) and the College of Mount St. Joseph (1920)—and the Athenaeum of Ohio (1829), a seminary. Other religious institutions include [Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion](#) (1875), the oldest rabbinic college in the [United States](#), and Cincinnati Christian University (1924; Churches of Christ).

Also of interest are the birthplace of President [William Howard Taft](#) (at Mount Auburn, designated a national historic site in 1969), the [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#) House (1833), and the Tyler-Davidson Fountain (1871) by the sculptor August von Kreling. The [John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge](#) (1856–67), designed by [Roebbling](#), has a main span of 1,057 feet (322 meters) and links Cincinnati and Covington; it was the second bridge across the Ohio. The [Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden](#), the second oldest zoo in the United States, is notable for its successful breeding of animals in captivity and for its use of naturalistic surroundings.

The [Great American Ball Park](#) (opened 2003), built to resemble ballparks of the early 20th century, is the home of the [Cincinnati Reds](#) (1869), the country's oldest professional baseball team; the [Bengals \(football\)](#) play at nearby [PayCor Stadium](#) (2000). Both [venues](#) are located along the river and flank the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (2004), which offers exhibits and educational programs. The Showboat *Majestic*, a historic monument, stages popular theatre productions on the riverfront, and renovated stern-wheelers are based across the Ohio River at Covington. Northeast of Cincinnati is a popular theme amusement park. The birthplace of President [Ulysses S. Grant](#) (restored as a museum) is along the Ohio at [Point Pleasant](#), about 20 miles (32 km) southeast.

Procedure for Candidacy

Please direct all applications, nominations and inquiries to the WittKieffer consultants assisting Northern Kentucky University with this recruitment, preferably via e-mail, to jcummings@wittkieffer.com or by phone, 630.575.6776.

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Northern Kentucky University values diversity and is committed to equal opportunity for all persons regardless of age, color, disability, ethnicity, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other status protected by law.

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 Northern Kentucky University 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.

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