

**Executive Director of Development, UC Gardner
Neuroscience Institute**

Leadership Profile

April 2026

Prepared by Ashley Buderus, Mercedes Vance, & Jess Cummings



Executive Summary

The UC Foundation seeks an accomplished and strategic fundraising leader to serve as Executive Director of Development for the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute. This is a high-impact leadership opportunity within one of the nation's most dynamic public academic health enterprises, advancing philanthropy in support of world-class neuroscience research, education, and patient care.

The UC Foundation is the philanthropic and alumni engagement partner for the University of Cincinnati and UC Health. With the successful conclusion of the Next Now campaign, which raised \$2.2 billion dollars, the UC Foundation ranks among the top public university advancement organizations nationally and is well-positioned for its next phase of growth and impact.

Within this enterprise, the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute stands as a flagship interdisciplinary institute and a cornerstone of the University of Cincinnati Academic Health Enterprise. Established in 1998 and housed since 2019 in a purpose-built facility, the Institute brings together more than 125 physicians and researchers across 15 specialties to deliver integrated care for patients with complex neurologic and psychiatric conditions. The Institute is nationally recognized for excellence in stroke care, neuroscience research, and multidisciplinary clinical programs, including Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, brain tumors, and neuropsychiatric disorders.

Philanthropy plays a central role in advancing the Institute's mission by fueling translational research, enabling the recruitment and retention of exceptional physician-scientists, expanding patient-centered care, and accelerating innovation in precision medicine and neuroscience.

The Executive Director of Development for the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute provides strategic leadership for all philanthropic activity supporting the Institute's research, clinical, and educational priorities. Reporting to the Vice President for Development, Academic Health Enterprise, this leader serves as the principal advancement partner to the Institute leadership, faculty, and key stakeholders.

The Executive Director is responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive major gift strategy, personally managing a portfolio of high-capacity donors, and leading a team of development professionals dedicated to advancing neuroscience philanthropy. This role works in close partnership with senior academic and clinical leaders across the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and UC Health to translate institutional priorities into compelling philanthropic opportunities with transformational potential.

As the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute builds on recent philanthropic momentum, including significant multimillion-dollar investments, the Executive Director will play a critical role in sustaining growth, deepening donor engagement, and positioning the Institute for future campaign activity. This leader will also collaborate closely with colleagues across the UC Foundation in areas such as prospect development, gift planning, stewardship, corporate and foundation relations, and alumni engagement to ensure strong alignment and maximize philanthropic impact.

The ideal candidate will bring seven to ten years of progressively responsible fundraising experience, with a proven record of securing major gifts at and above the \$100,000 level, preferably in complex environments such as academic medicine, health systems, or research institutions. Demonstrated success working with physician leaders, scientists, volunteers, and senior executives is essential.

The successful Executive Director will be a strategic thinker, collaborative partner, and visible presence who understands the critical role of philanthropy in advancing neuroscience research and patient care. Exceptional communication skills, experience leading and developing staff, and a deep commitment to the University of Cincinnati and UC Health's missions are required.

Those interested in this role, or wishing to nominate qualified candidates, are encouraged to review the Procedure for Candidacy section at the conclusion of this leadership profile.

Role of the Executive Director

The Executive Director of Development provides leadership, direction, and coordination of fundraising strategies to secure major philanthropic gifts from grateful patients, alumni, friends, volunteers, corporations, and foundations. The Executive Director is responsible for planning, implementing, and managing fundraising initiatives for all neuroscience research, education, and patient care across the Academic Health Enterprise, including the UC College of Medicine and the UC Health system. The activities of the Executive Director are coordinated with other UCF fundraising endeavors.

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Director of Development for the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute (UCGNI) is an exempt (salaried) position employed by the University of Cincinnati Foundation (UCF) and reports to the Vice President for Development, Academic Health Enterprise.

Responsibilities

The successful Executive Director candidate will:

Strategic Planning & Goal Setting

- Work with the Vice President for Development to prepare annual plans and establish goals; develop and execute strategies to achieve targeted results.

Team Leadership & Management

- Recruit, lead, motivate, and manage a team of development professionals.
- Establish objectives, performance standards, and productivity metrics; evaluate performance and provide appropriate training, mentoring, and professional development.
- Assign and direct projects and oversee the team's day-to-day operations.

Major Gifts Fundraising

- Personally manage a portfolio of major gift prospects (\$100,000+).
- Cultivate and solicit major and special gifts through personal visits within and outside the Cincinnati region, in alignment with the UCF development program.

Strategic Partnerships & Collaboration

- Partner strategically with UCGNI leadership, faculty, staff, trustees, and colleagues to prioritize fundraising initiatives and activities.

- Work collaboratively with UCF departments and fundraising specialists—including prospect development, gift planning, corporate and foundation relations, and national programs—to enhance fundraising revenue and donor impact.

Volunteer Engagement

- Provide guidance and support to volunteers involved in UCGNI fundraising initiatives.
- Develop strategies to recruit, train, and engage new volunteers.

Donor Stewardship & Relationship Management

- Ensure appropriate stewardship of gifts and donors.
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with major donors, stakeholders, and partners.

Reporting, Compliance & Systems

- Prepare timely contact reports and ensure accuracy of monthly reports.
- Participate fully in the UCF prospect management and clearance process.

Additional Responsibilities

- Complete special assignments related to awareness, involvement, and support as requested by faculty.
 - Perform other duties as assigned.

Candidate Qualifications

Education & Certification

- Bachelor's degree with **7–10 years** of progressively responsible fundraising experience, or an **advanced degree** preferred with **5–7 years** of experience.

Knowledge & Work Experience

- Record of successful **major gift solicitation and closure** at the \$100K level and above.
- Understanding of **basic scientific principles**.
- Willingness to travel and attend **evening and weekend activities** as needed; valid driver's license required.
- Commitment to and passion for the role of development in advancing the mission of the **Academic University of Cincinnati and UC Health**.

Leadership Skills & Competencies

- Demonstrated success in **coaching and mentoring** team members.
- Strong **interpersonal and written communication** skills.
- Ability to interact favorably with a **diverse group of individuals** and foster strong, productive relationships.



Organization Overview

UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute | UC Cincinnati College of Medicine



The University of Cincinnati Gardner Neuroscience Institute (UGNI) is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary academic center dedicated to advancing care, research, and education for patients living with complex neurologic and psychiatric conditions. Serving as Cincinnati's academic medical center for neuroscience, the Institute provides highly specialized, team-based care for disorders of the brain, spine, and nervous system, while advancing translational research and training the next generation of neuroscience professionals.

Established in 1998, UGNI represents a strategic partnership between the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and UC Health. Purposefully designed to bridge scientific discovery and clinical practice, the Institute brings together nationally recognized clinicians, scientists, and researchers within an integrated model that aligns patient care, research, and education. The Institute has developed a strong reputation as a destination center for patients with complex conditions, many of whom seek care after exhausting options elsewhere.

Today, the UGNI encompasses more than 18 subspecialty centers and brings together over 125 physicians across 15 clinical specialties, including neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry, rehabilitation, imaging, and translational neuroscience. This multidisciplinary structure enables coordinated, comprehensive care for patients with neurologic and psychiatric diseases, while supporting advanced diagnostics, specialized therapies, and access to clinical trials that are not widely available in the region.

In 2019, UGNI entered a significant new phase of growth with the opening of its permanent home, a purpose-built facility designed to foster collaboration across clinical care, research, and education. By co-locating physicians, researchers, trainees, and care teams, the facility strengthens communication, enhances efficiency, and accelerates the translation of discovery into clinical impact. The infrastructure also positions the Institute for future expansion, faculty recruitment, and programmatic growth.

Research is a central pillar of the Institute's mission and is deeply embedded within its clinical enterprise. With more than 120 active research studies and clinical trials underway each year, the Institute emphasizes translational science that moves innovation from the laboratory to the bedside. National leadership is exemplified by the Institute's role as the NIH/NINDS-funded StrokeNet National Coordinating Center, placing UGNI at the center of a nationwide network advancing stroke research and care.

As part of a leading academic medical center, UGNI plays a critical role in education and workforce development. Through the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, UGNI supports residency and fellowship training across multiple neuroscience-related specialties and emphasizes interdisciplinary learning to maintain the highest standards of care.

UGNI is guided by a deeply collaborative culture rooted in compassion, excellence, and problem-solving for patients facing life-altering conditions. United by a shared commitment to improving outcomes and quality of life, the Institute's clinicians and scientists are advancing the future of neuroscience while ensuring that patients across the region have access to the highest level of neurologic and psychiatric care.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Named among the Top 100 Neuroscience and Spine Programs in the United States
- Level IV Epilepsy Center offering the most advanced diagnostic and surgical options
- National leader in stroke research through StrokeNet

Quick Facts

- More than 125 physicians across 15 clinical specialties
- 18+ subspecialty centers dedicated to disorders of the brain, spine, and nervous system
- Over 2,700 neurosurgical procedures performed annually
- More than 120 active research studies and clinical trials each year
- NIH/NINDS-funded StrokeNet National Coordinating Center, supporting a nationwide network of more than 400 hospitals and centers
- Purpose-built facility opened in 2019, designed to support integrated clinical care, research, and education
- Regional and national patient referral base, including patients who seek care after exhausting options elsewhere
- Integrated academic model aligning clinical care, translational research, and education through the UC College of Medicine and UC Health



The Role of Philanthropy

Philanthropy is a driving force behind the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute's leadership in research, clinical care, and education. UGNI brings together more than 200 providers across 18 specialties, performs over 2,700 neurosurgical procedures annually, and supports more than 120 research studies and clinical trials, backed by more than \$80 million in research funding over the past five years.

Philanthropic investment provides flexibility to move faster and pursue opportunities beyond the reach of traditional funding. In research, it serves as a catalyst for discovery. Early-stage pilot funding has demonstrated a 17-to-1 return on investment, with \$925,000 generating more than \$16 million in external support. These investments enable bold ideas, accelerate innovation, and help recruit and retain leading physician scientists.

In clinical care, philanthropy expands access and supports new models of care. Demand for mental health services alone highlights the need, with nearly 500 new patients seeking care each week, while only about 10% can currently be seen. Strategic investment can significantly expand access and connect more patients to timely treatment.

Philanthropy also accelerates the translation of research into patient care. While it can take an average of 17 years for new discoveries to reach clinical practice, emerging approaches have the potential to reduce that timeline to under 3 years.

Finally, philanthropic support strengthens education and workforce development, helping train the next generation of physicians, nurses, and advanced practice providers while addressing critical workforce needs.

Philanthropy is transformative, enabling the Institute to deliver better outcomes today while advancing the future of neuroscience care.

For additional detail on priorities and impact, visit: <https://foundation.uc.edu/ucgni>.

[Watch | The Future of Research at the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute](#)

RECENT TRANSFORMATIONAL GIFTS

Gardner Family Foundation

\$20 million leadership investment advancing the long-term vision of the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute, with a focus on precision medicine and neurodegenerative disease research, including Parkinson's disease and movement disorders. ([Article](#))

L.I.F.E. Foundation

\$5 million philanthropic investment supporting neuroscience research and patient-centered care, strengthening translational discovery and clinical innovation across the Institute. ([Article](#))

UC Health and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

The UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute is a cornerstone of the University of Cincinnati's Academic Health Enterprise, an integrated clinical, research, and education platform that brings together UC Health and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. This enterprise model aligns discovery, patient care, and training at scale and positions the institution to advance complex, research-driven specialties such as neuroscience.

UC Health is Cincinnati's only integrated adult academic health system and serves as the primary clinical partner for the College of Medicine. Through this alignment, physician-scientists deliver advanced specialty and subspecialty care, advance translational research, and educate future health professionals. UC Health provides a regional and national clinical platform that supports highly complex care, clinical trials, and multidisciplinary collaboration.

The University of Cincinnati College of Medicine anchors the scientific mission of the Academic Health Enterprise and supports a robust physician-scientist model across departments and interdisciplinary institutes. Faculty practice as UC Physicians, enabling seamless integration of research, clinical care, and education. This model is particularly critical to neuroscience, where innovation depends on close collaboration across neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry, rehabilitation, imaging, and translational science.

Within the Academic Health Enterprise, the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute stands alongside other nationally recognized institutes, including the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center and the Center for Cardiovascular Research. Together, these entities serve as focal points for clinical innovation, faculty recruitment, research growth, and philanthropic investment.

The enterprise is strategically aligned under the University's Next Lives Here framework, which emphasizes academic excellence, urban impact, and innovation. Within this context, the neurosciences are a clear area of institutional strength and growth, positioning the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute as a flagship program with increasing national visibility and long-term strategic importance.

The University of Cincinnati

Founded in 1819, the University of Cincinnati is a leading public research university with a deep commitment to innovation, access, and urban impact. Ranked among the nation's top public research institutions, UC enrolls more than 53,000 students across 17 colleges and is recognized for its interdisciplinary strengths, research productivity, and experience-based learning model.

As a major urban research university, UC plays a central role in advancing health, education, and economic vitality in the Cincinnati region and beyond. The University's long-standing partnerships with the city, state, and regional health systems enhance its ability to translate research into real-world impact, particularly in areas addressing complex societal and health challenges.

The University's strategic direction, Next Lives Here, provides a unifying framework that aligns academic priorities with translational research, innovation, and community engagement. Within this strategy, the Academic Health Enterprise—and the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute in particular—represents a critical driver of discovery, advanced clinical care, and human health impact.

Through sustained investment in faculty, facilities, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research infrastructure, the University of Cincinnati is well-positioned to support continued growth and national leadership in neuroscience, strengthening the Institute's ability to attract top talent, secure competitive funding, and advance patient-centered innovation.

For additional information, please see the Appendix.

The University of Cincinnati Foundation

Philanthropy at the University of Cincinnati traces its roots to 1819, the founding year of UC, which saw the incorporation of two, now joined, units of the University – Cincinnati College and the Medical College of Ohio. Private gifts supporting these entities were made even before their first students enrolled, and the University of Cincinnati has continued a proud tradition of philanthropy – reflecting the traditions of the city that bears its name, considered among the most charitable and livable cities in the nation.

In 1972, Dr. George Rieveschl Jr., the inventor of Benadryl®, founded the first donor recognition society, now known as the Tower of Strength Society, to encourage and recognize gifts to the University. Three years later, he left his post as UC's Vice President of Research to become the Founding Chairman of UCF when it was created in 1975. In the years that followed, UCF has conducted six comprehensive fundraising campaigns, including the [Next, Now](#) campaign, and has met a number of milestones in its service to the University.

Formally, the UCF is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation and the private-sector fundraising entity for the University of Cincinnati. In 2015, the UCF entered into an agreement to be the philanthropic arm of UC Health by managing fundraising on behalf of the UC Health Foundation. The UCF and UC Alumni Association merged in 2016, with a mission to advance UC through aligned alumni engagement and development operations.

The Next, Now campaign, named in coordination with UC's Next Lives Here strategic direction, launched publicly in November 2019; reached its \$2 billion goal in September 2023; and closed June 30, 2024, raising \$2.2 billion. The previous campaign, Proudly Cincinnati, closed June 30, 2013, raising \$1.1 billion and elevating the UCF into the ranks of top public higher education fundraising organizations.

Mission

To inspire a community of UC and UC Health supporters through the power of philanthropy.

Vision

Igniting passion to transform lives.

Core Values

- We care deeply.
- We dream big.
- We uphold integrity.
- We drive excellence.
- We embrace inclusion.
- We nurture relationships.



Additional Information



Learn more about the University of Cincinnati Foundation at the following links:

- [Because of You Annual Report Fiscal Year 2024](#)
- [UCF IRS Form 990](#)
- [University of Cincinnati Alumni Association](#)
- [Virtual campus tour](#)

UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute | UC Cincinnati College of Medicine



The University of Cincinnati Gardner Neuroscience Institute is a comprehensive academic center dedicated to advancing care, research, and education for patients living with complex neurologic and psychiatric conditions. Established in 1998, the Institute represents a partnership between the UC College of Medicine and UC Health and serves as the region's leading academic neuroscience hub.

As Cincinnati's academic medical center for neuroscience, the Institute brings together the scientific strength of the university and the clinical expertise of UC Health to translate discovery into high-quality patient care. Through an integrated model that aligns research, clinical care, and education, the Institute delivers specialized therapies and innovative treatments that affect lives across Greater Cincinnati and well beyond the region.

In 2019, the Institute entered a new phase of growth with the opening of its permanent home, a purpose-built facility designed to advance collaboration across disciplines and support the full continuum of neuroscience research and care. The facility reflects the Institute's commitment to team-based, patient-centered care while providing infrastructure to support future expansion.

Driven by a deeply collaborative culture, physicians, scientists, and researchers work together to advance the Institute's clinical, investigative, and educational mission. Teams are united by a shared commitment to compassion, excellence, and problem-solving for patients who often arrive after seeking care elsewhere. The Institute is guided by the belief that every patient in the region deserves access to the highest standards of neurologic and psychiatric care.

Clinical Scope and Integration

The Institute brings together more than 18 centers and 125 physicians across 15 specialties, enabling coordinated care for disorders of the brain, spine, and nervous system. Its multidisciplinary model integrates neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry, rehabilitation, imaging, and translational research.

This structure allows teams to manage complex cases more effectively, particularly for patients who have not found answers elsewhere. Patients come from across the region and beyond to access specialized services and a coordinated, team-based approach to care.

Facilities and Infrastructure



Since moving to its current facility in 2019, the Institute has operated in a purpose-built environment designed to support collaboration across clinical care, research, and education. Clinical services, research teams, and training programs are located together, which improves communication and efficiency.




The facility supports advanced care delivery while also providing space for research expansion and program growth, positioning the Institute to scale its impact over time.

Leadership and National Standing

The Institute’s leadership is nationally recognized for both clinical innovation and research. [Joseph Broderick, MD](#), serves as Medical Director and is internationally known for his work in stroke care. He also leads the NIH-funded StrokeNet National Coordinating Center, placing the Institute at the center of a nationwide clinical research network.

The broader leadership team brings experience in academic medicine, federally funded research, and clinical program development. Together, they have built a culture focused on collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement across care, research, and education.

Core Pillars of Impact

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Clinical Care | Research | Education |

The UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute provides coordinated, multidisciplinary care for complex neurological and psychiatric conditions. The Institute combines over 200 providers across 18 specialties and performs over 2,700 neurosurgical procedures each year. This team-based approach allows patients to access specialized expertise that is not widely available elsewhere and supports the management of complex and often life-altering conditions.

Research is a central component of the Institute’s work, with more than 120 active research studies and clinical trials underway each year. Investigators are supported by strong infrastructure, national collaborations, and more than 80 million dollars in research funding over the past five years. The Institute emphasizes translational research, accelerating the movement of scientific discovery into clinical practice.

As part of an academic medical center, the Institute plays a key role in training the neuroscience workforce. The UC College of Medicine supports residency and fellowship programs across multiple specialties, including neurology, neurosurgery, and rehabilitation. In addition to physician training, the Institute provides continuing education and interdisciplinary learning to support workforce development and maintain high standards of care.

Quick Facts

- More than 125 physicians across 15 clinical specialties
- More than 2,700 surgical procedures are performed each year
- Nurse navigation services to help patients and families manage treatment across various settings
- National Coordinating Center for the NIH/NINDS-funded StrokeNet, a network of more than 400 hospitals/centers throughout the United States participate in coordinated stroke research.
- Level IV Epilepsy Center, providing the most advanced technology available to diagnose and treat epilepsy and other seizure conditions, including surgical options.
- Waddell Center for Multiple Sclerosis provides a state-of-the-art infusion center for Naluzumab, Rituximab, Ocrelizumab, and other monoclonal antibody infusions used to treat MS.
- Unmatched neurological surgery capabilities at the UC Brain Tumor Center



that

The Role of Philanthropy

Philanthropy is a central driver of growth across research, patient care, and education at the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute. The Institute operates at a significant scale, bringing together more than 200 providers across 18 specialties, performing over 2,700 neurosurgical procedures each year, and supporting more than 120 research studies and clinical trials. These efforts are backed by more than 80 million dollars in research funding over the past five years.

Within this context, philanthropy provides critical flexibility to invest in areas not fully supported by traditional funding sources. This includes early-stage research, recruitment and retention of top faculty, and the development of new models of care.

Philanthropic support helps accelerate discovery by funding pilot studies and innovative initiatives that position the Institute to compete for larger federal grants. It also supports endowed positions that allow physician-scientists to dedicate time to research, teaching, and mentorship.

In clinical care, philanthropy strengthens patient access, care coordination, and services for individuals with complex or life-altering conditions. It also enables investment in emerging areas such as precision medicine and mental health care.

Philanthropy further supports education and workforce development by enhancing training programs for physicians, nurses, and advanced practice providers. These investments help address workforce shortages while maintaining high standards of care.

Recent Transformational Gifts

Gardner Family Foundation

\$20 million leadership investment advancing the long-term vision of the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute, with a focus on precision medicine and neurodegenerative disease research, including Parkinson's disease and movement disorders. ([Article](#))

L.I.F.E. Foundation

\$5 million philanthropic investment supporting neuroscience research and patient-centered care, strengthening translational discovery and clinical innovation across the Institute. ([Article](#))

Leadership | University of Cincinnati Foundation



**O. Richard Bundy, III, President,
University of
Cincinnati Foundation**

Rich Bundy became President of the University of Cincinnati Foundation and Vice President of Advancement at UC on April 10, 2024. In his role, Bundy oversees all philanthropic efforts for UC and UC Health, as well as alumni engagement through the University of Cincinnati Alumni Association.

Bundy's career in higher education philanthropy spans 30 years, at Penn State University, the University of Vermont, Iowa State University, and Michigan State University.

His dedication to public higher education reflects his commitment to support the transformational impact a college degree can have in the lives of students and their families.

"Large public universities like UC educate significant numbers of first-generation and Pell-eligible students, and that education represents an inflection point in their lives," Bundy says. "Our work in advancement helps make those life-changing opportunities available for current students by inviting our graduates and friends to join us in this mission."

Prior to his UC appointment, Bundy oversaw the successful completion of Penn State's largest-ever comprehensive campaign in 2022, raising \$2.2 billion in six years. There, he directed an advancement team of nearly 600 employees across 24 campuses, raising funds for 13 academic colleges, Penn State Health, intercollegiate athletics, and the Penn State Alumni Association. Bundy also served as President and CEO of the University of Vermont Foundation and Vice President for Development at the Iowa State University Foundation.

Bundy earned a bachelor's and master's degree in history at Penn State and an M.B.A. at Michigan State. He also completed Harvard's Institute for Higher Education Management Development program.

"My goal at UC is to ensure we take every step necessary to maintain the impressive growth trajectory of our fundraising while simultaneously seeking out new opportunities to engage even more alumni, friends, and volunteers in the life of the institution," Bundy says.



**Christopher Higgins, Vice
President for Development,
Academic Health Enterprise**

The University of Cincinnati Foundation is pleased to welcome Chris Higgins as the new Vice President for Development, Academic Health Enterprise.

A veteran fundraiser with Cincinnati roots, Higgins joined the University of Cincinnati Foundation on January 5, 2026, bringing a record of achievement and extensive experience in higher education advancement, as well as in operational oversight and workflow management.

In his role, he oversees all fundraising for UC's medical campus, which includes the colleges of medicine, nursing, and allied health sciences, as well as the James L. Winkle College of Pharmacy and the UC Health system.

"Chris is a persuasive, results-driven, and effective team leader," says UC Foundation President Rich Bundy. "His ability to cultivate donor relationships, combined with his strong management and leadership experience, will significantly enhance fundraising for UC's academic medicine mission and UC Health, advancing scientific inquiry and improving health outcomes across our region."

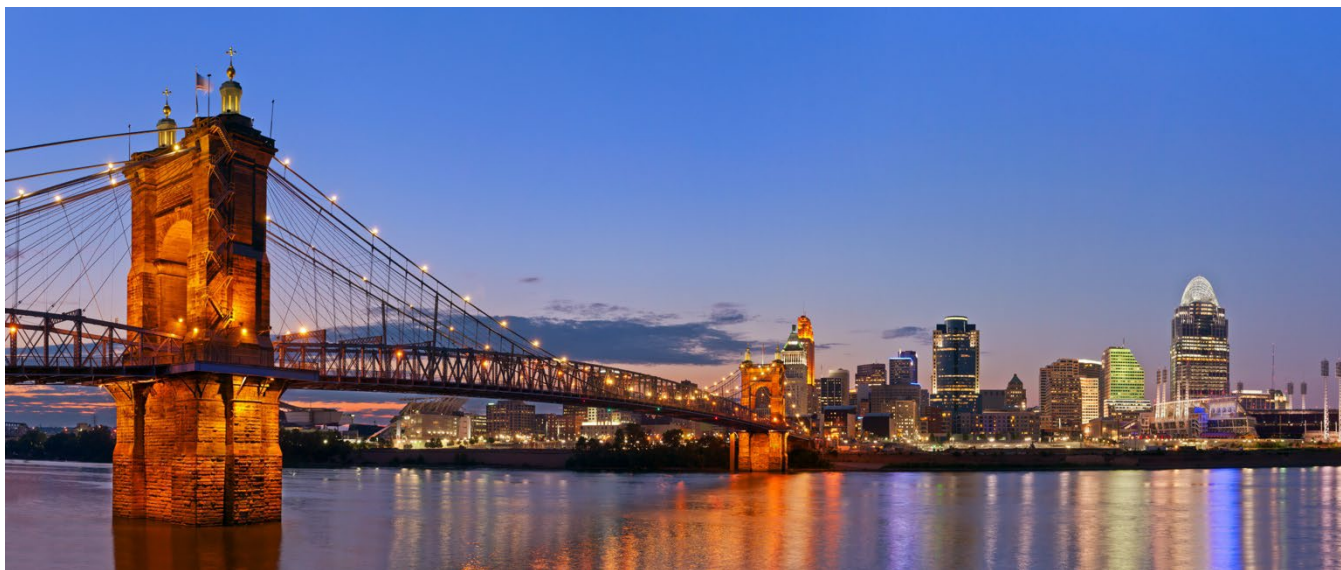
Higgins previously served at the University of Texas at Austin as the associate vice president for development in the Dell Medical School. His career in higher education advancement also includes positions as director of development at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, assistant dean and chief advancement officer at the University of Illinois College of Law, and chief development officer at the University of Texas Cockrell School of Engineering.

Higgins earned his bachelor's degree in communications from Ohio State University and his master's degree in business from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"As a Cincinnati native, contributing to the future of UC's academic medicine and patient care mission is deeply meaningful," says Higgins. "I'm excited to partner with UC and UC Health leadership in elevating our academic health enterprise to regional and national prominence."

The Community

Cincinnati, Ohio



UC's upward trajectory mirrors Cincinnati's ongoing renaissance. Home to more Fortune 500 companies per capita than New York City or Los Angeles, Cincinnati also boasts the fastest-growing economy in the Midwest. The city has been recognized as the "Best City for New College Grads," and *The Huffington Post* has named it one of the hottest Midwestern cities for startups. Cincinnati offers the amenities and opportunity of a major metro while maintaining the charm, affordability, and accessibility of a mid-sized city.

With a regional population of more than 2.2 million, Greater Cincinnati combines vibrant urban energy with inviting suburban neighborhoods, scenic river views, and rolling hills. Residents enjoy professional sports, world-class entertainment, a thriving arts and cultural scene, acclaimed museums, a nationally celebrated zoo, expansive parks and nature trails, and a flourishing riverfront. Families are drawn to the area for its excellent public and private schools, including a strong presence of Montessori education options, as well as the diverse national and international talent attracted by major employers.

Working at the University of Cincinnati means calling the "Queen City" home. Cincinnati offers an affordable cost of living, a revitalized and walkable downtown, endless entertainment options, and a high quality of life for individuals and families alike. In recognition of these strengths, *U.S. News & World Report* named Cincinnati among the **Best Places to Live in the U.S. for 2024–2025**, citing its strong job market, educational institutions—including UC—cultural amenities, professional sports, dining scene, and overall value.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.uc.edu/campaigns/fy26/our-city.html>

Procedure for Candidacy



All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. *Please do not add photos or reference contacts to your application materials.* Review of applications has begun and will continue until the position is filled.

Please submit all applications, nominations, and inquiries to the WittKieffer consultants, Ashley Buderus, Mercedes Vance, and Jess Cummings, through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#). New users should select “**Register Here**” to create an account before proceeding. After logging in, navigate to “**Open Positions**,” then locate the role by entering the institution’s name and clicking the search wheel.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can also be directed to the WittKieffer consultants assisting the University of Cincinnati Foundation with this recruitment via e-mail to jcummings@wittkieffer.com.

Ashley Buderus

Consultant

abuderus@wittkieffer.com

Jess Cummings

Associate

jcummings@wittkieffer.com

Mercedes Chacón Vance

Senior Partner

mcvance@wittkieffer.com

In accordance with the state of Ohio's 2025 “Advance Ohio Higher Education Act”: The University of Cincinnati declares that it will educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth. The University of Cincinnati declares that its duty is to equip students with the opportunity to develop the intellectual skills they need to reach their own, informed conclusions. The University of Cincinnati declares its commitment to not requiring, favoring, disfavoring, or prohibiting speech or lawful assembly. The University of Cincinnati declares it is committed to create a community dedicated to an ethic of civil and free inquiry, which respects the autonomy of each member, supports individual capacities for growth, and tolerates the differences in opinion that naturally occur in a public higher education community. The University of Cincinnati declares that its duty is to treat all faculty, staff, and students as individuals, to hold them to equal standards, and to provide them equality of opportunity, with regard to those individuals' race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

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 «Company» 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 obtained from the University of Cincinnati and are owned by WittKieffer Inc. via Getty Images.

Appendix

About the University of Cincinnati




In 1819, in the very heart of a still-young nation, in a period of invention that was transforming every level of society, a place of learning was founded that would become the University of Cincinnati. More than 200 years later, that institution is pursuing its Next Lives Here strategic direction and is poised to lead urban public universities into a new era of inclusion, innovation, and impact.

Ranked among the nation's Top 35 public research universities in a vibrant, diverse, and growing metropolitan area of over 2.2 million residents, the University of Cincinnati is one of the country's best-known and most respected institutions. UC and the broader UC community can proudly highlight the following:

- 17 colleges
- 350,000+ alumni
- 53,000 students
- 11,000 faculty and staff
- \$699 million in research expenditures
- \$2 billion endowment
- \$2 billion campaign goal reached in 2023
- Regional economic impact of \$10.6 billion
- BIG 12 athletic conference membership

UC's historic rise over the past decade has resulted in numerous milestones, including:

- Enrollment records for 9 of the past 10 years
- Research growth exceeding 45% since FY16
- Highest first-year retention rate in its history
- Largest number of National Merit Scholars in its history
- Among the world's most beautiful urban campus settings (*New York Times*)

As the inventor of cooperative education in 1906, UC remains a worldwide leader in experience-based learning, with student co-op earnings topping \$88 million last year alone. UC is ranked in the top five in the nation for co-op and internships by *U.S. News & World Report*. 

UC Research is accelerating economic growth in the region by connecting industry, government, and community leaders with university thought leaders and innovators. Together, they positively impact the lives, environment, and economy in the region and beyond. [The Digital Futures Complex](#) sits on UC's campus and is the crown jewel of the [Cincinnati Innovation District](#). It is comprised of over 20 cutting-edge research labs with faculty experts

from seven colleges focused on future mobility, AI, cryptoeconomics, human performance, skin sensors, and much more.

[The 1819 Innovation Hub](#) launched five years ago. It is the front door for businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors to access UC's faculty, technology, and resources. Its purpose is to streamline support, resources, and access to accelerate entrepreneurship in Cincinnati. The startup accelerator has over \$122 million in investment. It trains an average of 62 entrepreneurs each semester and has over 20 viable startups every year. Tech transfer has seen a 94% increase in patents and 109% increase in licensing deals. Innovation is in UC's DNA, and the number of patents filed has increased 62%. Some of the nation's best companies reside in the 1819 Innovation Hub, including P&G and Kroger, and the portfolio stretches from fintech to CPG. The building has the region's largest eSports facility with a broadcast and production studio.

[UC Health](#) is Cincinnati's only integrated adult academic health system, serving patients from all 50 states. UC Health has eclipsed \$2.1 billion in annual revenues, more than doubling its revenues in recent years and achieving an average annual compound growth rate of 8%. UC Health combines clinical expertise with research and teaching—a combination that provides specialty and subspecialty care unavailable elsewhere in the community. The UC Health Network includes University of Cincinnati Medical Center, West Chester Hospital, Daniel Drake Center for Post-Acute Care, Bridgeway Pointe Assisted Living, University of Cincinnati Physicians and University of Cincinnati Physicians Company (with 900+ board-certified clinicians and surgeons), and Lindner Center of HOPE. It also includes several specialized institutes and centers, including the UC Gardner Neuroscience Institute, the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center, and the Center for Cardiovascular Research.

University of Cincinnati Mission Statement

The University of Cincinnati serves the people of Ohio, the nation, and the world as a premier, public, urban research university dedicated to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, experience-based learning, and research.

UC is committed to excellence and diversity in its students, faculty, staff, and all of its activities. They provide an inclusive environment where innovation and intellectual freedom flourish.

Through scholarship, service, partnerships, and leadership, UC creates opportunities to develop educated and engaged citizens, enhance the economy, and enrich the university, city, state, and global community.

University of Cincinnati Vision Statement

Leading urban public universities into a new era of innovation and impact

The University of Cincinnati has pioneered bold change for more than 200 years. *Next Lives Here*, the strategic direction launched in 2018, builds on the past while disrupting academia's conventional ways of thinking and doing to define the next 200 years. It outlines an inventive framework that includes three platforms supported by many pathways: academic excellence, urban impact, and innovation agenda. UC intends to use this inventive framework to ignite our students' curiosity, inspire our faculty and staff, and unleash ingenuity to create an inclusive environment that fosters freedom to learn, explore, and innovate.

University of Cincinnati Values

- **Engagement** - We are empowered by people, perspectives, and ideas.
- **Innovation** - Challenging existing practices and paradigms and discovering the unknown.
- **Impact** - Positively transforming their community and society in measurable ways.

Strategic Direction (*Next Lives Here*)

As mentioned above, *Next Lives Here* is the strategic direction UC President Neville Pinto launched in 2018 to advance the University of Cincinnati's relentless pursuit of academic excellence, transformational urban impact, and path-defining innovation. This project emerged in response to the tectonic changes occurring worldwide and to the need for higher education to address them. The role of an urban university has never been more important or exciting, and UC implemented *Next Lives Here* to capitalize on the opportunity this moment presents. Below is additional information about the three areas addressed in this initiative:

- **Academic Excellence:** UC is committed to student access and success – it is the bedrock of our mission. To accelerate student success and graduate impact-driven leaders, UC must attract, invest in, and celebrate the people who comprise the University. Through the development of faculty, staff, and students, and the transformative curricular, scholarly, and operational excellence they provide, the UC is pioneering new ways of thinking, creating, and doing.
- **Urban Impact:** UC's well-being is inherently linked with the physical, environmental, social, and economic health of the community and the city. Cincinnati, and its business, civic, educational, and cultural offerings, provides UC and its stakeholders opportunities to reach beyond UC campuses to lead real-world learning, problem-based research and scholarship, and creative endeavors that address the multifaceted challenges affecting individuals and communities in an increasingly urbanized society. Urban Impact, through collaborations and partnerships with external counterparts, seeks to improve the human condition and advance sustainability for the institution, the city, the state, and the world.
- **Innovation Agenda:** UC is dedicated to pushing limits and challenging minds by providing the space and opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to connect, imagine, and discover. The formation of new collaborations and partnerships linking UC's talent in transformative ways—both internally and externally—provides a platform to advance and enrich experiences, ideas, and outcomes.

UC Academics

UC offers an education that's both rigorous and relevant – hundreds of academic programs, many nationally ranked, all with opportunities for real-world learning. From study abroad and co-ops to artistic performances and portfolios, students graduate with both a diploma and a resume.

**Colleges**

- [College of Allied Health Sciences](#)
- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)
- [College-Conservatory of Music](#)
- [College of Cooperative Education and Professional Studies](#)
- [College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning](#)
- [College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services](#)
- [College of Engineering and Applied Science](#)
- [The Graduate College](#)
- [College of Law](#)
- [The Carl H. Lindner College of Business](#)
- [College of Medicine](#)
- [College of Nursing](#)
- [James L. Winkle College of Pharmacy](#)
- [UC Blue Ash College](#)
- [UC Clermont College](#)
- [University of Cincinnati Libraries](#)
- [University of Cincinnati Online](#)

Next Lives Here: The Academic Health Enterprise

The close alignment of a thriving urban public research university and a vibrant private academic health system is a powerful catalyst for change. In 2022, the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees and the UC Health Board of Directors completed a two-year effort to reimagine the governance, leadership, and strategic alignment of the two organizations to unlock their shared potential. These changes are central to the full achievement of the vision described in UC's *Next Lives Here* strategic direction.



The UC College of Medicine sits at the intersection of the UC – UC Health academic health enterprise. The clinical faculty of the College, organized as UC Physicians, serves as the primary engine for fulfilling our health research, educational, and clinical mission. In addition, UC Health is instrumental in the educational and research missions of the colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Allied Health Sciences. Collaborations between the colleges of Business, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Medicine, and UC Health will be crucial as the convergence of computing, artificial intelligence, advanced informatics, and biosciences shapes innovation and care delivery in the future.

Through the integrated effort of UC's clinicians, scientists, and educators, and UC Health's clinical programs and services, we are poised to transform the health of the region and establish a role model for the rest of the world to elevate the health of an increasingly urban-centric global population. Together, UC and UC Health have identified an array of transformational initiatives to advance their commitment to the *Next Lives Here* Strategic Direction. Examples include:

- **Cancer Center** – UC, UC Health, and Cincinnati Children's have formed the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center (UCCC). The goal of the UCCC is to enhance cancer care in the region through clinical care, research, and education. The UCCC is on a path of growth and development necessary to submit its application for this designation in the near future. Future development of a state-of-the-art facility to house the UC Cancer Center will begin soon.
- **Neurosciences** – The University of Cincinnati Gardner Neurosciences Institute (UCGNI) serves as the home for one of the nation's top collections of clinician-scientists dedicated to advancing the treatment and prevention of neurological disorders and injury. The UCGNI is poised to become a global leader in this arena through continued expansion of critical areas, including the Gardner Center for Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders, the Neurobiology Research Center, and the Waddel Center for Multiple Sclerosis.
- **Community Health** – As a component of the *Next Lives Here* strategic direction, the Community Health pathway has been reconfigured to leverage UC resources to improve the health of the Cincinnati community. The major focus at present is to support community needs and the engagement required for the NCI Cancer Center designation. Further investment to enable expansion of partnerships and community health impact beyond cancer will advance our commitment to establish Cincinnati as the healthiest urban community in the U.S.
- **Data Sciences and Informatics** – UC Health's future success will be determined in part by its ability to harness the power of data. Precision medicine, novel drug development, targeted therapies, and population health strategies all require emerging experts equipped with leading-edge technology. The UC College of Medicine and UC Health have jointly hired a chief digital health officer with deep systems expertise. The joint creation of a digital road map aligned with *Next Lives Here* will inform future investments at the intersection of biosciences and technology.

As UC and UC Health deepen their collaboration in pursuit of a joint commitment to *Next Lives Here*, additional areas to be explored include new system models for mental health in urban communities, research targeting the use of cellular therapies incorporating precision medicine, artificial intelligence-enabled drug discovery, and advanced bioinformatics applied to population health management. In short, the academic health enterprise expression of *Next Lives Here* is a deep commitment to establishing Cincinnati as the healthiest city in the world.



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