



Executive Director of the Whitman-Walker Institute of Health Research & Policy

Leadership Profile

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WittKieffer

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The Opportunity

For over fifty years, Whitman-Walker has been part of the fabric of the local DC and national community as first responder and care-provider for those living with HIV; a leader in LGBTQ care and advocacy; a research center working to discover breakthroughs in HIV treatment and prevention science; and one of DC's most trusted partners during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Whitman-Walker envisions a society where all people are seen for who they are, treated with dignity and respect, and afforded equal opportunity to health and well-being. The Institute for Health Research & Policy at Whitman-Walker delivers life-changing results by conducting research studies to analyze barriers to good health and well-being, clinical trials to test state-of-the-art medications, and implementation science to advance patient-centered healthcare practices and policies. The Institute collaborates with healthcare providers, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, employers, and policymakers at multiple levels of government to enhance healthcare and public health systems.

Extending the mission to assist in areas beyond those currently being served will be an essential goal for this new Executive Director. Growing the business in response to community needs and building an inclusive scientific community will be the primary objectives. In addition to a passion for the mission, Whitman-Walker needs a proven leader who can connect great ideas with sustainable revenue streams to enable growth and continued support of all programs.

This Executive Director must be highly strategic, an exceptional relationship builder, and someone with the energy and drive to elevate the Institute to a new level of excellence. Solid financial management skills are mandatory, operating with transparency and accountability in all areas. An inspirational management style, accompanied by a commitment to educate and develop their team, is essential. An entrepreneur who is comfortable advocating on Whitman-Walker's behalf and is bold in their thinking is a crucial quality to possess. This leader should have a track record of breaking new ground, launching innovative ideas, and driving toward aspirational goals. This is an outstanding opportunity to join a recognized trailblazer in their field with a strong reputation in the communities they serve, yet with the exciting directive of broadening their impact.

Organization Overview

Whitman-Walker Health System

Whitman-Walker envisions a society where all individuals are seen for who they are, treated with dignity and respect, and afforded equal opportunities for health and well-being. Through care, advocacy, research, and education, they empower all persons to live healthy, love openly, and achieve equality and inclusion. For over 50 years, Whitman-Walker has been meeting the needs of its communities with the endless dedication of its diverse teams. Whitman-Walker Health System was formed in 2017 to advance Whitman-Walker's vision through a more diversified and financially sustainable business model. The Health System is comprised of the following corporate entities:

- Whitman-Walker Health System
- Whitman-Walker Institute
- Whitman-Walker Foundation
- Whitman-Walker Real Property Holdings

This group of distinct 501(c)(3) organizations is committed to one shared purpose and serves the community with state-of-the-art clinical care, research, advocacy, and education. Whitman-Walker's individual entities remain closely tied together, working in tandem to accomplish their mission, while guiding the activities of the Institute, Foundation, and Real Property Holdings.

Whitman-Walker Institute

Whitman-Walker Institute is one of the country's premier organizations focused on advancing the health and well-being of people facing barriers to quality care, particularly LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV, through the strategic integration of clinical expertise, research acumen, quality education, and policy change. The Institute holds its own 501(c) (3) designation and insists that its advocacy, education, and research must be community-centered to be effective within its community. The Institute provides mission-critical support to Whitman-Walker Health through expanded research, education, policy, and advocacy initiatives. The Institute and Whitman-Walker at large expanded its delivery of care options by building out the Max Robinson Center in SE DC. The new Executive Director will be expected to expand the mission to meet the needs of all in community. Expand the research portfolio beyond the LGBTQI+ population but making certain we continue to serve the LGBTQI+ community with excellence,

The Institute focuses on serving people and communities facing barriers to good health and high-quality health care. These communities include:

- People living across the lifespan with health conditions such as HIV and other infectious diseases, diabetes, cancer, and mental and behavioral health challenges
- Local communities in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, particularly communities in D.C.'s Wards 7 and 8
- Rural communities with limited access to health care
- Communities of color, including Black and Latino communities
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Patient populations at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other safety net healthcare centers

Their work builds on Whitman-Walker Health's 50-plus years of service to the Washington, D.C., area and beyond, including Whitman-Walker's pioneering role as one of the first clinics in the nation to conduct community-oriented research into the experiences of people living with HIV. Over the last four decades, Whitman-Walker has helped lead clinical trials for more than 80% of currently approved antiretroviral drug therapies, resulting in life-sustaining care for people living with HIV.

The Institute also conducts health policy development, research, analysis, and implementation to foster good health and well-being for communities in D.C. and across the country. They develop evidence-based health policy strategies to expand access to high-quality health care and dismantle barriers to good health and well-being. Policymakers, researchers, advocates, educators, and providers rely on us for healthcare policy expertise grounded in the lived experience of the communities with whom they have deep ties in Washington, D.C., and nationwide. Pillars of their work include:

- Expanding access for all to high-quality health care and health insurance coverage
- Enhancing responsible demographic data collection
- Improving the health and well-being of patients and communities served by Federally Qualified Health Centers and other safety net healthcare centers
- Policy and Education Experts
- A team of policy and education experts shapes innovative, evidence-based solutions that drive real-world improvements in health care and public health. Their work transforms health systems to improve access, quality, and outcomes for patients and communities at the local, state, and national levels.

Whitman-Walker Foundation

The Whitman-Walker Foundation utilizes philanthropy to ensure the sustainability and support the growth of all Whitman-Walker entities. The Foundation holds its own 501(c)(3) designation and has a board of directors, with the Chair also serving on the Whitman-Walker Health System board. The Treasurer of Whitman-Walker Health sits on the Whitman-Walker Foundation board. At the Whitman-Walker Foundation, "We Need You - means that we need community support to support the community."

Whitman-Walker Health System Real Property Holdings

Real Property Holdings owns and oversees the organization's strategic investment in LIZ, a mixed-use development located in the vibrant 14th Street corridor. The development features office tenants, ground-level retail with tenants such as Sephora and Faherty, as well as luxury and affordable housing units. This valuable asset, made possible through a visionary joint venture with a developer, helps secure the future of Whitman-Walker. Additionally, Whitman-Walker Health System is responsible for a portfolio of other real estate leases held by Whitman-Walker to generate additional revenue to support its mission.

Cultural Environment and History

The history of Whitman-Walker is quintessentially the history of committed volunteers and staff responding to and supporting the needs of the communities they have served for the first half-century.

Starting in 1973, a group of volunteers began the "Gay Men's VD Clinic" in the basement of a church in Georgetown in response to the lack of accessible and respectful care for gay men. In 1978, recognizing the need for its services as essential for both gay men and lesbians, the organization was incorporated as Whitman-Walker

Clinic, naming itself after two historical figures – Walt Whitman and Dr. Mary Edwards Walker. Notably, the hyphen in the name is significant, as it represents the man and the woman being connected, not separate.

In 1983, when AIDS was ravaging the community, Whitman-Walker Health emerged as a critical first responder, providing essential support and services to those affected by the epidemic, including housing, buddy programs, food, and legal services. Throughout the 1980s, the organization focused on offering care and supportive services for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), while also initiating AIDS clinical trials in 1987 to contribute to research efforts. As the 1990s rolled in, Whitman-Walker Health continued to expand its services, embracing the advent of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and playing a vital role in promoting tolerance and acceptance within the community. During the 1990s, Whitman-Walker Health achieved significant milestones by establishing both the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center (ETMC) and the Max Robinson Center (MRC) in 1993 as health centers in two areas of the city, further solidifying its commitment to serving the healthcare needs of the LGBTQ community and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Entering the 2000s, the organization faced critical sustainability questions as the urgency of the "AIDS" crisis diminished, leading to shifts in funding and changes in executive leadership. However, Whitman-Walker Health continued to adapt and evolve, demonstrating resilience in fulfilling its mission. In the 2010s, the organization made a significant step forward by becoming a Federally Qualified Health Center, enabling broader access to healthcare services for underserved populations. It is also expanding its services to the transgender community at this time. This decade saw an expansion of services in Logan Circle, DC, and a redevelopment of the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center.

In 2019, recognizing the need to diversify revenue and enhance sustainability for the organization, Whitman-Walker reorganized, establishing two independent but interdependent entities: Whitman-Walker Health and Whitman-Walker Health System. This reorganization also created the Whitman-Walker Institute and the Whitman-Walker Foundation. With the restructuring, Whitman-Walker aligned its leadership, boards, talent, and support within the Whitman-Walker ecosystem to maximize its impact.

Continued Growth

Named for acclaimed TV anchor Max Robinson, Whitman-Walker's expanded Max Robinson Center on the campus of Saint Elizabeth's opened in September 2023. The (Whitman-Walker Health) center currently sees more than 20,000 patients. Still, with an expansion of services in Southeast Washington, it will be able to see an additional 10,000 by the close of 2025 and implement over 60 research studies and clinical trials. The space will also enable Whitman-Walker to play a significant role in addressing some of the critical health disparities through care, research, and outreach in Wards 7 and 8 in DC.

[Fifty years in, Whitman-Walker builds future in underserved Southeast D.C.](#)



Position Summary

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Director of the Institute for Health Policy and Research reports to the CEO of Whitman-Walker Health System.

Responsibilities

Strategy and Growth

- Provide direction and leadership in the development of strategy, leveraging organizational strengths and relationships to execute on key operating/financial metrics and market growth.
- Actively engages in all aspects of strategic planning with the CEO and presents such results to the board in collaboration with the CEO
- Closely review and monitor the entire grants management process to align with organizational goals and expectations.
- Ensure that policies adopted by the Board of Directors are operationalized effectively and efficiently and vetted with the CEO before presentation to the board.
- Evaluates internal and external forces that impact the Institute's ability to fulfill its mission and, where appropriate, successfully recommends specific planning options to the CEO.
- Provides timely information briefs and programmatic updates on emerging research, education, and policy advocacy developments in collaboration with the policy leadership to ensure that the CEO and the Board of Directors stay apprised of the health care landscape.

Financial Oversight

- Accountable for the overall leadership and financial outcomes of the Institute in collaboration with the CFO. Must work very closely with the CFO and stay on budget. Stabilize finances in the face of pending federal cuts or operating plan shortfalls, while exercising sound leadership to ensure the efficient delivery of services that meet the needs of patients, physicians, employees, and the community.
- In collaboration with the Health System CEO, lead the development, preparation, and formal submission of the Institute's annual operating and capital budgets, sharing appropriately with the Board of Directors.
- Proactively monitor actual monthly financial performance to budget and, where appropriate, implement specific initiatives to increase revenue and/or reduce expenses.
- Allocate resources and operate within such available resources pursuant to the Chief Financial Officer's approval for operating and capital budgets.
- Identify and assess expansion of the mission, seek opportunities and make formal recommendations to the Health System CEO.
- Secure funding to meet new facility construction plans.
- Respond promptly to funding and other opportunities, pivoting to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

Leadership & Operations

- Effectively oversee the day-to-day operations of the Institute, assuming overall responsibility for the proper administration of all personnel policies and programs.
- Manages personnel and systems consistent with the Institute's overall strategic direction and approved policies and procedures in collaboration with the CEO.
- Establishes a dynamic workplace culture that places the highest value on advancing knowledge with integrity and purpose consistent with the Institute's mission.
- Provides leadership, which is collaborative in nature and progressive to diminish silos and enhance shared learning and expertise.
- Mentors team, champions professional development, and focuses on strategic recruiting and retention of talent. Provides timely reviews and encourages positive staff development.
- Create measures of success for every aspects of the operations. Identify measures of success, formalize processes, and establish transparent and trackable expectations.
- Excellent project management skills, including the ability to juggle major priorities, managing time and effort to meet strategic objectives.
- Establish a culture where quality, timeliness, and sustainability are core principles.
- Creates a strong culture of compliance, ethics, and integrity for the Institute through the adoption and implementation of an effective compliance and risk management program.

Advocacy/Communications

- Spokesperson and thought leader for the Institute to both internal and external stakeholders.
- Advances the Institute's mission and brand in the community through formal participation and presentations at various local, national, and international research, education, and policy advocacy venues.
- Establishes standards and practices for issuing public statements, in consultation with the Health System CEO, in collaboration with the Chief of Staff and Foundation Executive Direction.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills. Must serve as the voice and face of The Institute.
- Clearly communicates operating plan, individual's roles, and expectations.
- Develops relationships and pursues alliances that can lead to future work

Goals and Objectives

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

- Develop and implement strategic initiatives to build on existing revenue models and strategically assess and develop new revenue models. Develop a clear vision for the organization and a robust business model that ensures continued success and long-term viability.
- Provide direction and leadership to leverage organizational strengths and relationships to expand revenue-generating efforts and build a pipeline.
- Invest the time to listen and learn, understanding how the organization has evolved and the key role it plays with constituents, partners, and others. Must also understand how the different organizations within Whitman-Walker work together.
- Develop and lead the implementation of initiatives to amplify and expand philanthropic efforts.
- Support and strategically improve the impact of the Institute, working with senior leadership and the Institute Board.
- Actively engage with the community, as well as individual and corporate donors, local, state, and federal officials and agencies, and other key stakeholders. Be regarded as a credible, approachable, and compelling voice/face for One Whitman-Walker.
- Secure funding, hire necessary staff, and have the new Bio-Medical Hub up and running by the summer of 2026.

Candidate Qualifications

Education/Certification

- Graduate degree in health care, public health, clinical education, or public policy required. PHD or Ed.D preferred

Knowledge and Work Experience

- Ten or more years of leadership experience in a research institute, displaying notable expertise in research, education, and/or advocacy leadership roles. Must have excelled with responsibilities for program management, supervisory, budgetary, and board relations. Should include environments known for establishing and following high-quality standards and best practices for ongoing research studies, clinical trials, and grants management consistent with applicable public and private-funder requirements.
- Experience in public health or similar community health settings would be advantageous, especially with the knowledge of how to use metrics and the role measurement plays in impacting policy. Should have the knowledge associated with the cadence of reporting and how to apply costs appropriately.
- Track record of winning large research grants and expanding the relationships based on high-quality delivery. Analytical skills are essential for preparing accurate, concise, and comprehensive reports. Should also be skilled in managing funding streams that are nuanced. Helpful to have experience operation a research lab for social science and clinical science especially trials
- Clear evidence driving a business, expanding reach, and incorporating sustainability into all activities.
- Strong familiarity with federal regulations and the grant approval process.
- Knowledge of the local health care delivery system and relevant research, education, and policy advocacy priorities within the communities served by Whitman-Walker Health, with a special emphasis on groups that face various challenges in accessing care.
- Ability to collaborate with diverse groups of individuals across cultural, racial/ ethnic, gender identity, sexual orientation, and expression, and other factors required. Extensive executive-level experience (CEO or other senior leadership role) in a nationally recognized health care organization with exemplary quality, growth, and sustained financial strength.
- Passion for excellence: Believes in exceptional patient care, education, research, and service to the community.
- Experience leading a diverse workforce with dignity and respect required. Familiarity with the issues facing the community.
- Work with the policy team and the CEO to analyze key federal and local government policy, funding, legislative, and regulatory matters that impact the Institute.

Leadership Skills and Competencies

- Passion for excellence: Believes in exceptional patient care, education, research, and service to the community.
- Efficient and polished change management skills.

- Ability to coalesce the team around a mission.
- Growth mind-set to achieve financial sustainability and lead Whitman-Walker to be a national model.
- Collaborative, seasoned, and determined.
- Strong work ethic
- Innovative
- Politically savvy, can operate with finesse, but resolute in driving necessary change.
- Strategic thinker who can develop a plan and execute. Action-oriented.
- Willingness to jump in as needed, not to do others' work for them, but with a grasp of the details so they can jump in to assist.
- Transparent
- Curious to ask questions and seek data to support choices/decisions.
- Holds self-accountable; seeks to earn trust by delivering on promises.
- Leads by engaging others, continually rounds, and gets to know the individuals and the story behind the numbers.

Procedure for Candidacy

Please direct all nominations and applications to Rachel Polhemus and John Fazekas through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at www.wittkieffer.com by selecting the "Become a Candidate" button. The salary for this role is \$150 - \$200K.

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Whitman-Walker Health System 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.

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