

# UAB MEDICINE®

Chair, Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data  
Science

Leadership Profile

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*WittKieffer*

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## The Opportunity

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Heersink School of Medicine (HSOM) is seeking a collaborative and visionary leader to serve as the next Chair, Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science (Chair of DBIDS). Reporting to and working closely with the Dean of the Heersink School of Medicine and the Senior Vice Dean, Heersink School of Medicine, the Chair will work to fulfill both UAB's and the department's commitment to advancing human health by transforming data, tools and techniques into actionable knowledge. Serving as the strategic, academic, and operational leader of an evolving department at the intersection of clinical care, research innovation and digital transformation, this role offers the opportunity to shape a vision for how data, computation, and technology accelerate discovery, improve patient outcomes, and strengthen the academic mission of a leading US academic health system.

UAB is an internationally renowned public doctoral research university—ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in NIH funding and 12<sup>th</sup> among public universities in the United States—and a leading academic health center—the 5<sup>th</sup> largest public hospital in the United States. With a reach stretching across classes, cultures, and continents into inner-city classrooms, rural clinics, and far corners of the globe, UAB is experiencing major and sustained investment and growth due to its exceptional research faculty and its culture of collaboration embodied in a matrixed organization. Through concerted and strategic investments in its clinical and research enterprise, UAB has undergone an amazing transformation in the past five years and has strengthened its status and reputation as a leader in medical training, biomedical discovery, innovation, and patient care.

Reporting to the Senior Vice President for Medicine and Dean, Anupam Agarwal, M.D., the Chair of DBIDS will support the school's vision for advancing health through the creation of novel strategies to sustain and grow the Department and continue to enhance the mission areas of research and education in biomedical informatics and data science. Providing strategic leadership for all aspects of the Department, including the positive representation of DBIDS within the Heersink School of Medicine and the UAB system, the next Chair will create new opportunities for broad collaboration in support of institutional goals. With a high degree of visibility across the organization, including through informal partnerships, research initiatives, governance groups, and other means, this role has the potential to create a great deal of impact enterprise wide.

The ideal candidate will be an accomplished leader in the field of biomedical informatics and data science, with a robust record in grant funding, scholarly achievements, institutional partnership development, recruitment and retention, and mentorship of junior faculty. The Chair of DBIDS will demonstrate a strong ability to collaborate effectively with leaders representing a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and priorities. The successful candidate will also be adept at navigating the complex dynamics of an academic medical center, with a clear understanding of how to engage across its interconnected educational, research, and clinical service missions. The role requires a high level of competency in financial stewardship, including disciplined budget management and thoughtful resource allocation. In addition, the successful candidate must articulate a compelling vision for the future, centered on building a nationally recognized, research-driven department of biomedical informatics and data sciences that is highly competitive and attractive to both undergraduate and graduate students. The Chair of DBIDS will hold a faculty appointment and participate in the scholarly, service, and educational missions of the Heersink School of Medicine.

## Organization Overview



### About UAB

UAB is a member of the University of Alabama System, the state of Alabama's largest single employer and an internationally renowned research university and academic health center; its professional schools and specialty patient-care programs are consistently ranked among the nation's top 50. As the only public, four-year degree-granting university in the state's largest metropolitan area, it is the largest research institution in the state of Alabama. Anchored in the 1859 founding of the Medical College of Alabama and the 1936 opening of the Birmingham Extension Center of the University of Alabama, UAB became its own independent institution in 1969.

Today, as a comprehensive R1 university and academic medical center, UAB is proudly located in Birmingham: home to 1.1 million metropolitan residents. Birmingham is notable as the birthplace of the civil rights movement, one of America's most renowned culinary destinations, and is nestled within the stunning natural landscapes of the Appalachian foothills and the Warrior and Cahaba River watersheds.

At \$12.1 billion annually, UAB has the largest economic impact on the state of any other academic institution. Decades of transformative gifts, including a successful capital campaign that raised \$1 billion and a recent \$100 million naming gift for the Heersink School of Medicine, have helped fuel UAB's rapid growth via faculty and student support. UAB is the first university in the United States to adopt the Okanagan Charter and become an internationally recognized [Health Promoting University](#).

As an anchor institution in Birmingham and Alabama, UAB is committed to serving the needs of its surrounding communities and the state. The university provides countless opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to serve the community through institutional partnerships, programs, and service-learning projects that create significant impact and strengthen the Birmingham area.

## Vision

UAB's goal is to sustain strategic growth that has a positive impact on people's lives. From education to patient care to community engagement, the people of UAB are committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Birmingham, Alabama, the nation, and the world. UAB strives for collaboration, accountability, respect, and excellence in all its endeavors.

## Forging Ahead: 2024–2028 Strategic Plan

[Forging Ahead](#), UAB's strategic plan through 2028, builds on the success of prior plans to illuminate the university's path forward.

The plan is built upon three foundational themes: **Financial Sustainability, Diversity, and Environmental Stewardship**.

In turn, these foundations support four key pillars: **Education; Research, Innovation, and Economic Development; Community Engagement; and Patient Care**.

## Research Strategic Initiative

UAB's Research Strategic Initiative is an ambitious effort to grow the university's research enterprise and enhance the lives of those it serves through discovery, innovation, and meaningful societal impact. Through strategic faculty recruitment, enhanced research infrastructure, expanded clinical trial capabilities, and advanced technology platforms, UAB is creating an environment that supports groundbreaking discovery and interdisciplinary collaboration. These investments reflect the university's commitment to strengthening research excellence, accelerating innovation, and advancing solutions that improve lives in Alabama and around the world.

## Schools and Colleges

UAB comprises 12 schools and colleges:

- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)
- [Collat School of Business](#)
- [School of Dentistry](#)
- [School of Education and Human Sciences](#)
- [School of Engineering](#)
- [The Graduate School](#)
- [School of Health Professions](#)
- [Honors College](#)
- [Heersink School of Medicine](#)
- [School of Nursing](#)
- [School of Optometry](#)
- [School of Public Health](#)

## UAB Medicine: Heersink School of Medicine and UAB Health System

UAB Medicine, comprised of the Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine (HSOM) and the UAB Health System, is Alabama's largest and most comprehensive health system, and is nationally recognized for delivering exceptional patient care, groundbreaking research, and advanced medical education. HSOM has campuses in Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa and is committed to training the next generation of physicians, physician-scientists, and scientists pursuing innovative research and discovery, with the goal of delivering the highest quality health care to all patients. HSOM educates more than 800 students and 1,100 residents and fellows yearly. With over 2,000 full-time faculty across 27 academic departments, the HSOM is the heartbeat of UAB Medicine, one of the top academic health systems in the United States.

The UAB Health System is a rapidly growing \$8B organization with more than 33,000 employees. In fall 2024, UAB Health System acquired Ascension St. Vincent's Health System in central Alabama, which included 5 hospitals, a freestanding Emergency Department, and imaging centers and other clinics across the region. With the addition of the new care sites as part of UAB St. Vincent's, the UAB Health System now operates 16 network hospitals and 3,743 licensed beds, caring for more than 1.45 million patients per year from every county in Alabama, all 50 states, and many countries across the globe. UAB Medicine is anchored by University Hospital, its 1,400-bed tertiary/quaternary hospital and academic health science center located in Birmingham's medical district. In 2025, UAB Hospital earned national recognition as one of the country's best hospitals with five US News & World Report ranked programs including two in the top 20; Rheumatology (#11) and Ear, Nose and Throat (#14). The hospital also earned the distinction as the "Best Hospital" in the state of Alabama. UAB Hospital remains a destination for the region as the state's only American College of Surgeons (ACS)-designated level 1 trauma center and a Magnet-designated facility. The hospital provides care for the sickest patients in the state and offers many services not available at other medical centers in Alabama, including research clinical trials. The University of Alabama Health Services Foundation (UAHSF) is the faculty practice of HSOM and powers UAB Medicine's ambulatory care. The 1,550 physicians and 800 advanced practice providers deliver specialty and subspecialty care with a deep commitment to improving the health and lives of all they serve.

## Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science

A relatively new Department, having transitioned from an Institute in 2024, DBIDS is home to leading experts and distinguished scholars who are dedicated to developing new approaches and tools to solve problems relevant to human health and disease, including biomedical discoveries, and the development of novel therapeutics and other treatments. The department consists of nine core faculty (four full professors, three associate professors, and two assistant professors) two adjunct faculty and an additional 26 secondary faculty. The department supports undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral education programs. With current research funding totaling \$2.4 M, the department's researchers possess expertise in clinical informatics, computational genomics, clinical research informatics, and translational bioinformatics.

### Educational Programs

The **B.S. in Bioinformatics** was the first in the state of Alabama and exists as a collaboration between the Department of Biology and the Department of Computer Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Genetics and the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science in the HSOM.

The Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science now offers a **PhD program in Biomedical and Health Informatics** that prepares individuals to develop and apply informatics theories and tools to solve complex problems across the life sciences and health ecosystem. With its first cohort entering in 2025, the program is built on a core-track model, with core courses providing fundamentals in analytics, research methods, and foundational informatics concepts. The program currently has three specialty tracks: translational bioinformatics, clinical and

health informatics, and artificial intelligence in medicine. The total enrollment for the first two cohorts is 14 doctoral students.

The **postdoctoral fellowship in Biomedical Informatics** within the department provides the opportunity to train in research areas across the biomedical informatics spectrum.

The department offers opportunities for postdoctoral training to qualified candidates, covering a wide variety of topics across the spectrum of biomedical informatics.

### Research Areas

**Clinical Informatics** research seeks to develop ways to improve the quality and efficiency of patient care through better data collection, communication, and decision support. Four faculty members lead the clinical informatics initiative within the department.

**Clinical Research Informatics** focuses on providing enhanced usability of existing UAB data repositories through tools like Integrating Informatics for Biology to the Bedside (i2b2). This includes enhancing user interface, ontology searches, data download capabilities, and data analysis tools. Three faculty members lead the clinical research informatics initiative within the department.

The **Computational Genomics Research** effort is led by three faculty members within the department. Work focuses on studying the human genome, studying immune cell repertoires using next-generation sequencing, and other initiatives.

DataLENS is an institution-wide platform for supporting team-based translational research. It includes access to over 15 years of clinical health record data on over one million patients available for reuse in research, access to HIPAA-compliant high-performance computing, and a suite of analytic tools to support bioinformatics and clinical research. DataLENS is being developed as a joint effort between the DBIDS, the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS; see below) and the UAB Health System.

Additional information about the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science can be found at <https://www.uab.edu/medicine/informatics/>.

### Center for Clinical and Translational Science

Established in 2008, the CCTS has been at the forefront of innovative research aimed at reducing the burden of cardiometabolic, vascular, and cancer-related diseases that disproportionately affect Alabamians. As one of ~60 Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) nationwide, CCTS is committed to fostering collaborative efforts that transcend institutional boundaries.

#### Vision

The vision of the Center for Clinical and Translational Science is to harness the tremendous collaborative energy the CCTS Partner Network has generated to accelerate the discovery, dissemination and implementation of new findings, deliver more treatments to more people more quickly, reduce the burden of chronic disease and improve health in the Deep South and beyond.

#### Mission

Working together, the Center will enhance the translation of fundamental and clinical research into improvements for human health and health care delivery. By further developing a well-trained workforce in translational science, by promoting an efficient scientific capacity, by engaging communities in partnership to identify challenges and

create approaches to solutions, and by assuring effective use of available resources, the CCTS Partner Network will accelerate the pace of discovery to delivery across the translational spectrum.

### CCTS Goals

The following goals have been articulated by CCTS leadership:

The CCTS provides programmatic leadership that harnesses and accentuates the resources and talents across the Partner Network, a consortium of 11 institutions across Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. It brings together academic, health system, industry, and community partners in the Deep South to advance discovery science, including the dissemination and implementation of new findings.

The CCTS is furthering the development of a vibrant clinical and translational science workforce through didactic and experiential training and mentoring with an emphasis on team science and translational thinking.

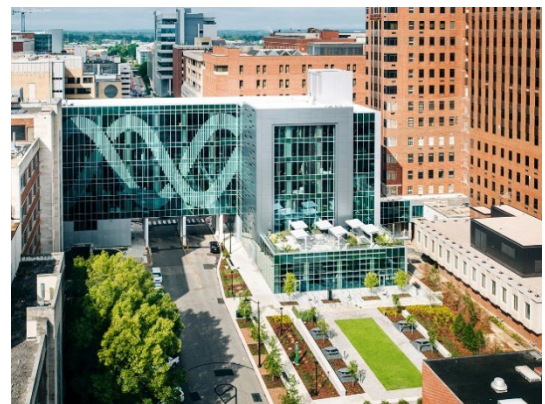
The CCTS partners with communities and stakeholders in trusting, bidirectional relationships that develop, disseminate, and implement new discoveries impacting the most important health issues for the region and country.

The Center advances informatics and data science resources that catalyze and coordinate the use of high-dimensional, interoperable data across the Partner Network and CTSA consortium, integrating collaborative analytic teams to accelerate scientific discovery and translate new knowledge into practice. It is enabling discovery research from the bench to the learning healthcare system and back, leading the way in developing a nimble, digitally integrated ecosystem that forms the leading edge of discovery science. This enables the CCTS to accelerate the pace and impact of new discoveries through rigorously designed and effectively implemented clinical trials, and pilot studies and clinical & translational science research by providing a range of specialized services capacities, resources and consultations.

### The Altec/Styslinger Genomic Medicine and Data Sciences Building

In 2025, a new 175,000 square foot building was opened, serving as a hub to unite researchers, equipment, leadership and staff from the Heersink School of Medicine. The building serves as a dynamic center for interdisciplinary collaboration, enhancing UAB's competitiveness in biomedical research, innovation, and commercialization.

The Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Sciences is housed in this world class facility and there is room for departmental expansion within the footprint of this new building.



## Position Summary

The Chair of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science will serve as the strategic, academic, and operational leader of an evolving department at the intersection of clinical care, research innovation and digital transformation. Providing overarching, collaborative, thought leadership for Biomedical Informatics, Data Science, Clinical Informatics, AI innovation and enterprise data strategy across the HSOM and the academic health system, this individual will be a nationally recognized scholar with a strong record of funded research, scholarly accomplishments, program building, and collaborative leadership. The Chair will advance a culture of excellence in research, education and service, recruit and mentor outstanding faculty, and strengthen partnerships with clinical, translational, and population health programs. This leader will also play a central role in shaping institutional strategy around the application of AI resources in healthcare, digital health, and data-driven discovery.

## Reporting Relationships

- The Chair of DBIDS will report to the Senior Vice President for Medicine and Dean, The University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine.
- The Chair of DBIDS will lead a department that currently includes 9 faculty members as well as four administrative staff

## Responsibilities

The successful Chair of DBIDS candidate will:

- Provide strategic leadership for a multidisciplinary department spanning biomedical informatics, data science, clinical informatics, computational biology, and health system analytics.
- Expand and diversify extramural funding by strengthening existing portfolios and cultivating new sources, including federal, industry, and philanthropic support; seed high-potential research to accelerate external funding and increase departmental impact.
- Oversee graduate education and curricula in informatics and data science, championing modern programs that are both developed and maintained by the department, as well as certifications and classes with other programs that ultimately prepare the next generation of leaders for an increasingly informatics-enabled world.
- Partner with health system leadership to advance data governance, analytics infrastructure, clinical decision support, and the responsible deployment of AI.
- Ensure the effective and efficient execution of the department's missions across education, research, and clinical service in alignment with the needs of patients, clinicians, staff, and the broader community.
- Define and advance a forward-looking departmental vision that anticipates emerging opportunities and challenges in healthcare and biomedical informatics.
- Maintain strong financial stewardship of departmental resources, including personnel, operating budgets, and current and future funding streams.
- Foster internal and external collaborations that drive innovation across the institution, with academic, clinical, and industry partners.

- Inspire and mentor faculty, staff, and trainees to pursue impactful scientific inquiry across informatics, translational science, precision medicine, and clinical care.
- Identify opportunities to recruit leading faculty to UAB that can help to further elevate the position of the department both within the University of Alabama System as well as the national stature.
- Serve as a leading voice for biomedical informatics across UAB Medicine, aligning resources to support priority research initiatives and institutional goals.
- Drive transparent, high-impact communication of biomedical informatics initiatives and amplify departmental achievements to internal and external stakeholders.
- Collaborate with the Dean, CMIO, CDIO, and other senior leaders to accelerate translational research across the medical school and health system.
- Contribute to the scholarly mission through peer-reviewed publication and national representation at leading conferences and scientific societies.
- Advance biomedical informatics education through continuous curriculum development, including PhD and postdoctoral training programs.
- Build and sustain strategic partnerships with external organizations, including academic institutions and industry.
- Ensure compliance with institutional and regulatory standards for information security, including the responsible use of EMR and protected health information.
- Contribute to program development and provide expert consultation on informatics-driven research initiatives and collaborative proposals.

## Goals and Objectives

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

- **Serve as a Strategic Leadership Partner:** Collaborate closely with senior leadership—including the Dean, Senior Vice Dean, Chief Digital & Information Officer (CDIO), Chief Medical Information Officer (CMIO), and other key stakeholders—to become a fully integrated member of the UAB leadership team. Cultivate strong, trusted relationships across the research and academic enterprise, demonstrating credibility, integrity, accountability, and recognized expertise in biomedical informatics.
- **Define and Champion a Forward-Looking Vision:** Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the current research and academic portfolio and translate findings into a clear, actionable vision and strategic roadmap for the department within the Heersink School of Medicine. Effectively communicate and advocate for this vision internally and externally, galvanizing faculty, institutional partners, and the broader community.
- **Develop and Mentor Faculty Talent:** Identify, mentor, and support the advancement of junior faculty, fostering a culture of professional growth, academic excellence, and leadership development.
- **Anticipate Future Needs and Drive Innovation:** Proactively identify emerging trends and evolving institutional needs, and design forward-looking solutions, teams, and strategies to position DBIDS for long-term success. Build consensus and secure alignment across IT, clinical departments, and operational leaders.
- **Elevate the Research Enterprise:** Strengthen and expand existing faculty research to establish a world-class, nationally recognized informatics program. Assess current areas of excellence and strategically invest in initiatives that build differentiated, high-impact research domains.
- **Recruit and Retain Top Talent:** Lead the recruitment of high-caliber faculty who can make an impact across the missions of research, education, and clinical care, while fostering an environment that supports the growth and advancement of their research portfolios, enhancing the department's overall stature and productivity.
- **Advance Academic and Training Programs:** Continuously enhance academic offerings to develop future leaders in clinical, research, and administrative informatics. Ensure programs remain innovative, relevant, and aligned with evolving industry and academic needs.
- **Deepen Health System Integration:** Build strong, collaborative partnerships with the UAB Health System to identify synergies and expand opportunities for joint initiatives, including shared tools, data platforms, and research efforts that advance the organization as a learning health system.
- **Expand Educational Reach and Impact:** Identify and develop new educational offerings—including programs, certificates, and courses—that broaden the department's reach and reputation across both basic and clinical sciences.
- **Influence Enterprise Governance and Strategy:** Actively participate in institutional governance related to data, technology investment, and innovation, serving as a strong advocate for biomedical informatics and data science priorities at the enterprise level.

## Candidate Qualifications

### Education/Certification

- PhD, MD, or MD/PhD in biomedical informatics, computer science, clinical research, epidemiology, data science, or related field.

### Knowledge and Work Experience

- Academic rank of Professor or Associate Professor.
- Accomplished leader in the field of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science, with a demonstrated ability to build programs that develop and apply cutting edge biomedical informatics and AI technologies to healthcare applications.
- Minimum of 5 years' experience leading research informatics initiatives in an academic health system or translational research environment.
- Record of scholarly productivity and leadership in clinical research informatics, evidenced by publications, grants, and national roles.
- Competency navigating interactions with education, research and service missions of a complex academic medical center department.
- Proven capabilities in financial stewardship, budget management, and resource allocation.

### Leadership Skills and Competencies

- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills.
- Leadership style that drives change and innovation while effectively delegating and maintaining accountability.
- Deep commitment to advancing research and educational missions.
- Collaborative approach with a genuine appreciation for consultation; fosters and supports innovation.
- Visionary leader with a strategic, big-picture mindset; views challenges as opportunities and embraces accountability.
- Decisive and proactive leader who welcomes input, makes tough decisions, and provides clear direction.
- High-energy, enthusiastic presence that inspires others.
- Confident, forward-thinking, and innovative.
- Effective change agent with the ability to navigate complexity and remove barriers.
- Skilled consensus builder who aligns stakeholders toward common goals.

# The Community

## Birmingham, Alabama



With a population of about 200,000, Birmingham is the main center of the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Area, Alabama's largest region by population and economy, with just over one million residents. UAB's decades-long partnership with its community and state has led to the economic, cultural and social renaissance of Birmingham, as the city has grown to a thriving nexus of R & D, medicine, banking and other service industries. Known as *The Magic City*, Birmingham is a vibrant place with outstanding communities. Birmingham is home to world-class medical care, research, and a celebrated food and arts scene.

The Birmingham Museum of Art is the largest art museum in the southeast. In addition, Birmingham is home to the state's major ballet, opera, and symphony orchestra companies including the Alabama Ballet, Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Ballet, Birmingham Concert Chorale, and Opera Birmingham. UAB's Alys Stephens Center serves as Birmingham's home for the performing arts and an anchor of the Cultural Arts District.

Alabama is a paradise for those who love the outdoors. Birmingham boasts more green space per capita than any other city of its size in the nation, with breathtaking locations in the nearby foothills of the Appalachian Mountain range to the white sands of the Gulf Coast beaches, both a short drive away. The city is home to the Sidewalk Film Festival, the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama in April, and the Birmingham Freedom Fest in the summer. Sports enthusiasts will appreciate great football, including the UAB Blazers at Protective Stadium and the Morehouse Tuskegee Classic, the Magic City Classic, and the Birmingham Bowl, as well as strong minor league teams in baseball, basketball, football, ice hockey, and soccer.

The Birmingham area is also home to some of the country's best high schools. The Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School in Irondale, an eastern suburb of Birmingham, has ranked consistently among the nation's top five high schools. Multiple other local schools have been rated among America's best. The metro area is also home to three highly regarded preparatory schools: Saint Rose Academy, the Altamont School, and Indian Springs School.

Five interstates provide access to more than 80% of the U.S. population in a two-day drive. The Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport offers 114 flights to 26 airports and 23 cities. Atlanta's International Airport and metro area are nearby, while lovely beach communities are easily accessible along the coast.

In the Birmingham Metropolitan Area, more than 550 technology companies employ more than 6,300 skilled workers. The city is home to the Innovation Depot, where 112 startups are located throughout a sprawling 140,000-square-foot complex, the largest in the Southeast. Birmingham has the highest per capita concentration of healthcare jobs nationwide and is also the 12th largest banking center in the nation and the third largest in the Southeast.

Learn more about [Birmingham](#)



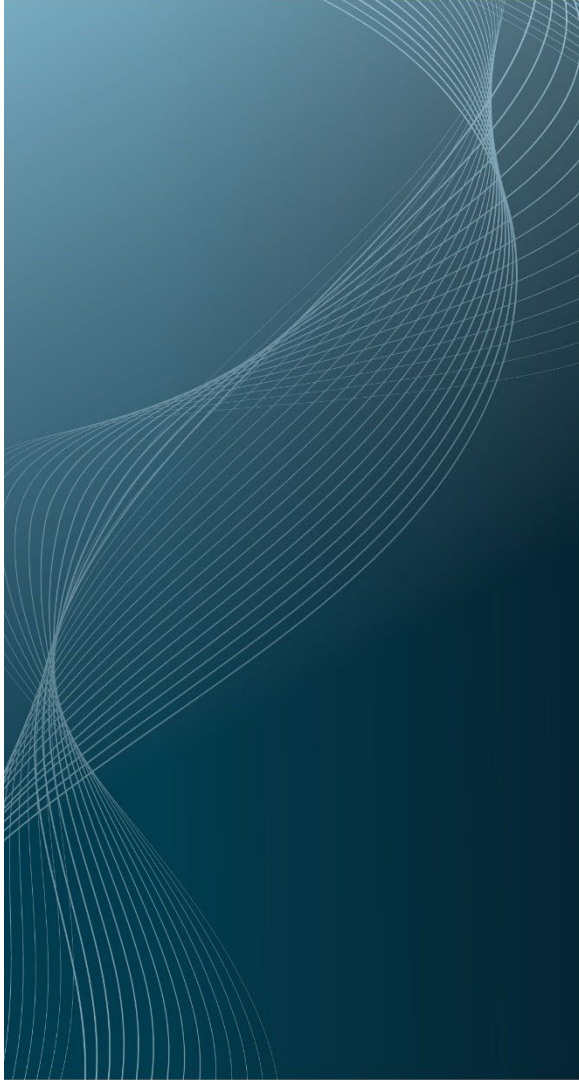
## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. Please direct all nominations and applications to Zachary Durst, Valerie Weber, and Scott Dethloff through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by clicking [here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at [www.wittkieffer.com](http://www.wittkieffer.com) and selecting the "Become a Candidate" button.

*University of Alabama at Birmingham 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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