



Chief Research Informatics Officer

Leadership Profile

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WittKieffer

Contents

The Opportunity	01
Organization Overview	02
Position Summary	07
Goals and Objectives	09
Candidate Qualifications	10
The Community	11
Procedure for Candidacy	13

The Opportunity

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) seeks an innovative, experienced, and visionary leader to serve as its inaugural Chief Research Informatics Officer (CRIO). This dual-role position offers an exceptional opportunity to lead the development and integration of research information systems across UAB Medicine and the Heersink School of Medicine, advancing UAB's commitment to excellence in clinical care, research, education, and operations, fulfilling a vision of seamless knowledge management across the enterprise.

UAB is an internationally renowned public doctoral research university and academic health center. UAB's reach stretches across classes, cultures, and continents into inner-city classrooms, rural clinics, and far corners of the globe. UAB currently is experiencing major and sustained investment and growth due to its exceptional research faculty and its culture of collaboration embodied in a matrix organization. UAB, through concerted and strategic investments in its clinical and research enterprise, 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 both the Chief Information Officer of UAB Medicine and the Chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science, the CRIO will serve as the senior leader responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive strategic plan, with a focus on integrating and extracting data, leveraging digital tools and computing platforms across the research and administrative functions. The CRIO will be a core leader in clinical research informatics, supporting the continued evolution of the Epic EHR system. The CRIO will help define the future data environment, ensuring Epic is leveraged as a strategic platform for embedded clinical trials, research patient portals, and advanced analytics for trial recruitment and outcomes monitoring. This critical leadership role will provide strategy and vision in the areas of clinical informatics, research computing, data warehousing and extraction, informatics education, grant writing, and technology innovation to directly support the clinical, basic science, and academic needs of the UAB research community.

The CRIO will hold a faculty appointment at the Associate or Full Professor level and participate in the scholarly, service, and educational missions of the Heersink School of Medicine. This role has high visibility across the organization, including through informal partnerships, research initiatives, governance groups, and other means.

The ideal candidate will have research informatics technology and data management experience in healthcare, clinical research, or research laboratory settings as well as a proven ability to use data to inform research design and clinical decision support. They will bring a deep understanding of data acquisition, interoperability, and extraction across domains, enabling enterprise-wide synergy that drives innovation and improves clinical outcomes. They will be a collaborator and bridge builder, an outstanding communicator, and an adept team- and program-builder.

Organization Overview



About UAB

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), a member of the University of Alabama System, is 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 possesses 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**.

Growth with Purpose: A Strategic Initiative for Research

Concurrent with the development of the Forging Ahead strategic plan, the university formulated [Growth with Purpose](#), a strategic initiative to grow UAB's research enterprise to further enhance the lives of those it serves by fostering positive, healing transformation, empowerment, and lasting societal benefit.

As part of the initiative, UAB seeks to increase research expenditures to \$1 billion, placing the university in an elite company of research institutions nationwide. This growth will ensure that UAB continues to drive innovation in research and improve the human experience.

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](#)

Learn more about [UAB](#).

UAB Medicine: Heersink School of Medicine and UAB Health System

UAB Medicine comprises 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 answering basic scientific questions that lead to medical innovations and bringing 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 Heersink School of Medicine 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 15 network hospitals and 3,552 licensed beds, and each year the system cares for more than 1.45 million patients from every county in Alabama, all 50 states, and many countries across the globe. UAB Medicine is anchored by University Hospital, its 1,327-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 the HSOM and powers UAB Medicine's ambulatory care. It's 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 Bioinformatics and Data Science

Situated as a Department within the Heersink School of Medicine, the department is home to leading experts and distinguished scholars who are dedicated to develop 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. Led by James J. Cimino, MD, Chair, the department consists of nine core faculty and an additional 29 adjunct faculty. The department supports undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral education programs. The department's researchers have 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 School of Medicine.

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

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, including the Chair, lead the clinical informatics initiative within the department.

Clinical Research Informatics focuses on providing enhanced usability of the existing UAB data repository, Integrating Informatics for Biology to the Bedside, or i2b2. This includes changes to the user interface, to search ontology, data download capabilities, and data analysis tools.

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 Bioinformatics 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.

Position Summary

The inaugural Chief Research Informatics Officer (CRIO) will serve as the senior executive leader with responsibility for advancing the strategic vision, development, and implementation of research informatics across UAB Medicine. This role will bridge biomedical research, data science, and information technology to enable cutting-edge research, foster innovation, and support data-driven decision-making. Serving as a thought leader, the CRIO will serve as a key advisor to health system and medical school leadership on digital trends and innovation opportunities to advance research and learning health system goals.

The CRIO will provide leadership in the design and oversight of informatics infrastructure, including data governance, integration of clinical and research data systems, and support for translational research. Collaborating closely with faculty, researchers, IT professionals, and institutional leadership, the CRIO will ensure that informatics solutions align with research priorities, current and future.

Reporting Relationships

- The Chief Research Informatics Officer will report to both the Chief Information Officer of UAB Medicine and the Chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science

Responsibilities

The successful Chief Research Informatics Officer candidate will:

- Demonstrate an academic, educational, and research portfolio to support appointment at an Associate Professor or Professor level
- Maintain an independent, funded research program

In addition, the CRIO will carry out the following responsibilities in the domains of strategic leadership, research infrastructure/innovation, academic and community engagement, and organizational development:

Strategic Leadership

- Develop and implement an enterprise-wide Research Informatics strategy aligned with UAB Medicine's clinical and translational research mission
- Serve as a key advisor to health system and medical school leadership on digital trends, investments, and innovation opportunities that advance research and learning health system goals
- Lead the integration of research, clinical care, education, and operational data systems to enable enterprise-wide knowledge sharing and a unified data strategy that supports both investigators and health system leaders.
- Represent UAB in local, regional, and national research informatics initiatives, including CTSA activities and health data collaboratives

Research Infrastructure and Innovation

- Direct the design, deployment, and optimization of informatics tools to support cohort discovery, trial eligibility, recruitment, study management, and research data analytics
- Serve as the technical and strategic lead for UAB's use of Epic for Research, including governance, customization, and user support, with a forward-looking perspective on how Epic can evolve to support research and clinical integration over the next five years

- Lead implementation and governance of platforms such as REDCap, i2b2, and OMOP-based data marts, and explore integration with next-generation technologies (e.g., generative AI, digital phenotyping)
- Identify and translate emerging informatics innovations (e.g., FHIR, SMART apps, AI/ML) into scalable research infrastructure

Academic and Community Engagement

- Mentor and collaborate with investigators, trainees, biostatisticians, and IT professionals to advance research projects and promote workforce development in clinical informatics
- Contribute to research grant proposals and serve as a PI or co-investigator on externally funded informatics initiatives
- Serve on health information governance committees to ensure research needs are represented in data policy and compliance decisions
- Promote inclusivity in research design and engagement, particularly in support of UAB's commitment to health equity

Organizational Development

- Lead, recruit, and develop a high-performing team of IT professionals with expertise in research computing, data management, and analytics
- Foster a culture of service, innovation, transparency, and accountability across the Research IT organization
- Ensure efficient use of resources and alignment with enterprise project management and cybersecurity standards

Goals and Objectives

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

- Partner with senior management, including the CIO, Chief Medical Information Officer (CMIO), Chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Data Science, and others, becoming fully integrated into the leadership team at UAB. Build strong relationships across the research and academic enterprise and be perceived as a solid team player who has credibility, integrity, accountability, and contributes broadly as a subject matter expert in informatics.
- Identify gaps and opportunities to enable effective research IT operations and a high-performing, service-oriented team, ensuring reliable and consistent service delivery to meet the needs of users across the organization.
- Serve as a bridge-builder, a thinker, and a do-er, bringing many threads and elements of IT infrastructure as it relates to research together with the goal of creating a seamless knowledge management network across the enterprise.
- Develop a reputation locally, regionally, and nationally as a thought leader in research informatics. Develop a vision for research informatics that attracts collaborators, funders, and faculty, expanding UAB Medicine's reputation for excellence.
- Develop a vision for research informatics that ensures continued success and viability for the future.
- Cultivate a supportive and energizing culture that recognizes staff and promotes career growth and development, aiding in recruitment and retention.

Candidate Qualifications

Education/Certification

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

Knowledge and Work Experience

- 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.
- Experience with Epic or other electronic health records as used in research and clinical trials.
- Experience with CTSA programs or large-scale collaborative research initiatives.
- Demonstrated success in developing enterprise-wide informatics tools or platforms.
- Ability to work collaboratively across institutional boundaries with academic, clinical, and operational leaders.
- Familiarity with federal regulations and ethical standards governing human subjects research and health information privacy (e.g., HIPAA, 21 CFR Part 11).

Leadership Skills and Competencies

- A collaborative leadership style
- A proven stakeholder driven approach to all endeavors
- Diplomatic and politically astute
- A visionary – able to see the big picture – who sees problems as opportunities and is willing to be held accountable
- Strong leader who is receptive to suggestions, yet able to take a stand, make tough decisions, and provide direction in a proactive manner
- Energetic and enthusiastic
- Confident and innovative
- Change agent who is able to navigate and remove barriers
- Consensus builder

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 committed to becoming the best version of itself. 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 been 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 Hillary Ross, Zachary Durst, Valerie Weber, Scott Dethloff through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by clicking [here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at www.wittkieffer.com and selecting the "Become a Candidate" button.

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.

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 University of Alabama at Birmingham documents and personal interviews and is believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern.

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