

# UC San Diego Health

Jacobs Medical Center

**Director, Care Management**

Leadership Profile

May 2026

*Prepared by April Allen, Diane Smith, BSN, RN, and Brittany Amaral*



**WittKieffer**

## Contents

<b>The Opportunity</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Organization Overview</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Position Summary</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>Candidate Qualifications</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>The Community</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Procedure for Candidacy</b>	<b>11</b>

## The Opportunity

The Director of Care Management at UC San Diego Health's Jacobs Medical Center (La Jolla, CA) offers a rare opportunity to step into a highly visible, system-critical leadership role within one of the nation's top academic health systems. UC San Diego Health is the region's only academic health system and a nationally recognized leader in patient care, research, and education, consistently ranked among Vizient's Top 10 Academic Medical Centers and #1 in San Diego by U.S. News & World Report. The Director will oversee care management operations at Jacobs Medical Center on the La Jolla campus, a 365-licensed-bed tertiary and quaternary care hospital serving a high-acuity patient population with significant oncology and emergency department volume. This role sits at the center of patient throughput, discharge planning, and value-based performance, and reports to the system CAO, Care Management, with a team of 45 FTEs.

During the first 12–18 months, the Director is expected to make an immediate impact on patient flow, length of stay, and progression to the next level of care in a fast-paced environment where demand consistently exceeds capacity. Current priorities include addressing emergency department boarding and inpatient access challenges, optimizing observation length of stay (LOS), and sustaining progress on inpatient LOS. The Director will play a central role in length-of-stay reviews, partnering with physicians, care managers, social work, utilization management, and executive leaders to identify barriers, escalate issues, and implement real-time solutions. A strong Physician Advisor program—established early by executive leadership—provides an important clinical partnership to support utilization and throughput decisions. Success in this role requires comfort with operating at speed, navigating complexity, and maintaining momentum in an environment of high patient acuity and constant operational pressure.

Care Management at UC San Diego Health is a mature, highly Lean-oriented function with a strong culture of standard work, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement. The Director will have meaningful autonomy to reshape workflows, refine staffing models, and advance care coordination strategies, while working within a unionized workforce. The organization emphasizes disciplined problem-solving—defining problems with data, measuring performance, analyzing root causes, and implementing sustainable improvements rather than relying on instinct. The Director will collaborate closely with peers in Social Work, Clinical Documentation Integrity, IT, and Finance, as well as with external post-acute partners and payors. With stable leadership, low vacancy rates, strong frontline engagement, and robust access to Lean training and analytics resources, this role offers a highly supportive platform for an experienced Care Management leader to drive measurable operational improvement and contribute to the mission of a top-tier academic medical center.

## Organization Overview

UC San Diego Health has been caring for the community for more than 50 years. The system is one of five academic medical centers within the 10-campus University of California system, collectively known as UC Health. These medical centers comprise the fourth-largest health care delivery system in California, and train nearly 50% of the state's medical students and medical residents. UC San Diego Health has a three-part mission of clinical, research, and teaching excellence. The system includes three hospitals: UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest, with 390 beds; Jacobs Medical Center, with 365 beds; and Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center, with 54 beds. There are also numerous ambulatory and specialty clinics located throughout the county to deliver care to the entire region.



[UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest](#) (390 beds), established in 1966 at the site of the former County Hospital, serves as a principal clinical teaching site for the UC San Diego School of Medicine and is a focal point for community service missions.

It is home to the area's only Regional Burn Center to be verified by the American College of Surgeons and the American Burn Association as a pediatric and adult burn center, one of only two adult Level I Trauma Centers in San Diego County, and the state's only chronic kidney disease program certified by The Joint Commission. Its Stroke Center is widely recognized for its excellence in patient care and was one of the first five certified Comprehensive Stroke Centers in the nation. The campus includes the Owen Clinic, founded in 1982 and among the nation's top HIV care programs for men, women, and children.

Psychiatric services are also offered in Hillcrest, including adult inpatient psychiatric care, intensive outpatient psychiatric care for older adults, and an early psychosis program for young adults. To meet the region's growing demand for cancer services, a multidisciplinary cancer clinic staffed by physicians specializing in some of the most commonly diagnosed malignancies recently opened. There are long-range plans to develop the 62-acre Hillcrest campus into a modern, walkable, and environmentally sustainable health care district.

**Jacobs Medical Center, the La Jolla campus at UC San Diego Health**, is a 365-bed advanced medical center that offers inpatient care, surgical facilities, outpatient clinics, a blood bank, and a pharmacy. It is connected to Perlman Medical Offices and includes Thornton Pavilion, an inpatient facility formerly Thornton Hospital. It is within walking distance of [Moores Cancer Center](#), Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center (54 beds), the inpatient facility for the newly created Cardiovascular Institute.

The unique features of our 10-story Jacobs Medical Center, which opened in 2016, include:

- Ten operating rooms (ORs), including a four-OR intraoperative imaging suite designed to support the most advanced brain and spine surgeries.
- A floor dedicated to blood and marrow transplantation patients, with a full-floor air filtration system that enables immunocompromised patients to leave their treatment rooms to walk, exercise in a gym, and visit family and friends.
- Care for every kind of birth, including three rooms within a midwifery-staffed Birth Center, 32 private postpartum rooms with foldout beds for family members, and a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) with 52 private rooms.

- Dedicated family areas with lounges and kitchenettes on each inpatient floor.
- Rooftop helicopter landing pad.
- A 150-piece therapeutic art collection.
- This building obtained the Gold Certification from the [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design \(LEED\)](#) U.S. Green Building Council.

[Koman Family Outpatient Pavilion](#), opened in 2018, is a four-story building that features eight operating rooms for surgeries that once required hospital stays, as well as specialty services in orthopedics and sports medicine, breast oncology and imaging, and urology, among others

[Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute](#), opened in 2016, supports nearly every clinical trial at UC San Diego Health. The 18,000-sq-ft, state-of-the-art facility supports hundreds of studies from more than 125 different investigators from a broad range of specialties.

The La Jolla campus also includes [Moore's Cancer Center](#), the region's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center; Shiley Eye Institute, a multi-specialty vision center with the region's only facility dedicated to children; and Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center (54 beds), the inpatient facility for the newly created Cardiovascular Institute.



East Campus Medical Center (302 beds), UC San Diego Health East Campus Medical Center is dedicated to providing high quality health care to the communities of eastern San Diego, including La Mesa, El Cajon, and College East. Their facility is equipped with modern technology and a comprehensive range of services designed to meet the diverse needs of their patients.

## Excellence in Clinical Care and Community Health

Hospitals and doctors are not all alike. Across the nation and within California, there are significant variations in the training and expertise of health care providers. UC San Diego Health is proud to deliver high quality, safe care for every patient, while also working to eliminate health disparities among underserved and at-risk communities.

- UC San Diego Health named No. 1 in San Diego by U.S. News & World Report.
- In addition to top rankings in U.S. News & World Report, UC San Diego Health is recognized as having the highest level of safety from The Leapfrog Group with an "A" for both academic medical campuses and is top ranked nationally among Comprehensive Academic Medical Centers by Vizient Inc. for demonstrating excellence in delivering high-quality care. CMS has also recognized UC San Diego Health as a five-star institution for the quality of our care.
- More Top-Ranked Specialties: The 2025-2026 U.S. News & World Report survey evaluated more than 4,400 hospitals across 15 specialties and 22 common procedures and conditions. Nine of their specialties ranked in the nation's top 50: Obstetrics & Gynecology (7), Pulmonology & Lung Surgery (8), Geriatrics (18), Cardiology, Heart & Vascular Surgery (27), Gastroenterology & GI Surgery (28), Neurology & Neurosurgery (28), Diabetes & Endocrinology (32), Cancer (41), Urology (46).
- Top Marks for Hospital Safety: UC San Diego Health hospitals in La Jolla and Hillcrest once again earned top marks from The Leapfrog Group in spring 2023 for keeping patients safe from preventable harm and medical errors.

- **Top Docs:** More than 100 UC San Diego Health physicians in 46 specialties were named "Top Docs" in the San Diego Magazine "Physicians of Exceptional Excellence" survey for 2022, an annual opportunity for doctors across the region to vote for much-admired colleagues.
- **Nursing Excellence:** We maintained Magnet status from the American Nurses Credentialing Center, considered among the highest recognitions for nursing excellence and innovation in nursing practice.
- **Outstanding Stroke and Diabetes Care:** We earned the 2023 American Heart Association's / American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines – Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award and are listed on its honor rolls for Stroke Elite Plus, Stroke Advanced Therapy, and Type 2 Diabetes.
- **Excellence in Maternity Care:** Our obstetrics & gynecology care is ranked among the top 20 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report for 2023-24.
- UC San Diego Health was also listed on the 2022 Maternity Care Honor Roll, awarded by Cal Hospital Compare in partnership with the California Health & Human Services Agency. In 2022, we also achieved all the maternity care standards identified by The Leapfrog Group for quality of maternity and neonate care.
- **Information Technology to Enhance Patient Care and Comfort:** UC San Diego Health was named a Level 9 "most wired" hospital in both the acute and ambulatory categories by the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) in 2021. These distinctions recognize our efforts to focus on technology strategies that support meaningful outcomes for our patients.
- **LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader:** We scored a perfect 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Index in 2022.
- **Environmental Sustainability Leader:** UC San Diego Health holds Practice Greenhealth's highest honor for hospitals, which is awarded to industry leaders in all-around sustainability performance.
- **Age-Friendly Health Care** — In 2019, UC San Diego Health became the first health care system in San Diego to be recognized by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement as an Age-Friendly Health System — Committed to Care Excellence.
- **Anti-Racism Task Force** — In 2020, it launched a Health Sciences Task Force focused on Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, reflecting its commitment to advancing anti-racism and health equity initiatives.

## Mission

To deliver outstanding patient care through commitment to the community, groundbreaking research and inspired teaching.

## Vision

To create a healthier world – one life at a time – through new science, new medicine and new cures.

## Transforming Health Care

### About UC San Diego Health Sciences:

UC San Diego Health Sciences encompasses UC San Diego Health, the region's only academic health system, UC San Diego School of Medicine, one of the nation's top research-intensive medical schools, Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Southern California's first public school of pharmacy, and Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science.

## Position Summary

UC San Diego Health is the region's only academic health system and a nationally ranked leader in patient care, research, and education. The network comprises three major hospitals and specialty centers, providing advanced care in cardiovascular, cancer, transplant, and maternity services. Recognized by Vizient as a top 10 academic health system for seven consecutive years and ranked #1 in San Diego and #5 in California by U.S. News & World Report, we consistently earn national honors across multiple specialties. We have held Magnet designation for nursing excellence since 2011, reflecting our commitment to the highest standards of patient care and professional practice. Join us in an innovative, collaborative environment where your work makes a meaningful impact.

The Director of Care Management is an experienced senior leader and subject matter expert in utilization review, discharge planning, acute care case management, and care management department leadership. The director ensures adequate staffing, directs departmental resources, and, in collaboration with Executive Leadership, plans and implements new or improved operational workflows and/or services. The director frequently collaborates across the health system and with other departments, post-acute care organizations, and payors to achieve desired outcomes.

The director oversees a large department through subordinate managers or multiple smaller units or manages a highly specialized technical function or team. The director has significant responsibility for achieving broadly stated goals through subordinate managers. Determines objectives, directs programs, develops strategies and policies, manages human, financial, and physical resources, and operates with a high degree of autonomy. Proactively assesses risk and establishes systems and procedures to protect organizational assets. Determines strategies for a program with organization-wide impact.

It involves a collaborative process among clinicians (typically in social services, discharge planning, utilization review, and patient throughput) that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet the patient's complex medical discharge planning and transitions of care needs, as well as the health and human service needs. It is characterized by planning, advocacy, communication, and resource management and promotes quality, cost-effective interventions and outcomes.

### Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the CAO, Care Management, the Director of Care Management has five direct reports and 45 FTE's.

### Key Responsibilities

The successful Director, Care Management candidate will:

- Participates in the strategic planning of care coordination programs, workflows, policies, and procedures across the medical center and/or health system.
- Oversees and directs the development of systems to support integrated, effective, and efficient work processes.
- Collaborates with Information Technology senior management to integrate care coordination and case management needs in organization-wide IT initiatives, including electronic medical records, revenue management, patient finance, and business intelligence.
- Oversees data analysis and the preparation of presentations, proposals, and executive summaries. Utilizes data and metrics to prioritize quality initiatives and long- and short-term strategic planning.

- Collaborates with patient care directors, service line directors, physicians, and executive leadership across the medical center or health system to improve coordination and facilitate optimal patient care throughput. Approves and oversees the implementation of quality improvement measures and plans.
- Advises and consults with physicians and executive leadership on integrating case management into patient care delivery models.
- Provides strategic direction to assist in ensuring compliance with accreditation and licensure requirements with the clinical services environment, including JCAHO, CMS, and the State of California.
- Responsible for employee performance reviews, recruitment, retention, terminations, and staff development and training programs. Instills strong management practices to create a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and timely achievement of objectives and goals.
- Reviews, approves, and oversees the implementation of best practice methods and policies that improve both patient quality of care and the financial outcomes for the medical center.

## Goals and Objectives

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

- Stabilize throughput and relieve emergency department (ED) congestion by reducing LOS. Address immediate bed-access challenges driven by high ED volumes (≈100 visits/day, 20% admission rate, high-acuity oncology population) by aggressively reducing inpatient LOS and Observation LOS. Use LOS reviews, physician-advisor escalation, and real-time problem-solving to move patients more efficiently to the next level of care and decompress ED boarding.
- Advance a data-driven, Lean operating model across Care Management. Strengthening Care Management's role as a performance driver by rigorously using data to identify barriers, test interventions, and sustain gains, avoiding anecdotal decision-making. Apply Lean and standard work principles to define problems, measure variation, and continuously improve utilization management, discharge planning, and care transitions.
- Optimize discharge planning and care progression across the continuum. Lead the implementation and adoption of enhanced discharge planning tools to enable earlier identification of discharge needs, faster placement decisions, and smoother transitions to post-acute care. Prioritize moving patients to the appropriate next level of care sooner, particularly for complex and cancer-related cases.
- Leverage strong clinical partnerships and physician advisor programs. Expand the impact of an already high-performing Physician Advisor model to support medical necessity, timely decision-making, and escalation of LOS barriers. Strengthen collaboration with CDI, Social Work, and medical leadership.
- Sustain a high-performing workforce in a unionized environment. Maintain stability and engagement in a highly unionized setting by adhering to established agreements and maximizing role clarity, standardized workflows, and deployment efficiency. Build on strong staffing and ensure that care managers and social workers remain fully integrated within units and with clinical teams.

---

## Candidate Qualifications

### Minimum Qualifications

- A bachelor's degree in nursing is required.
- Current Registered Nurse (RN) in the State of California or the ability to obtain licensure in California.
- Eight or more years of relevant experience, including five or more years of care management experience in an acute hospital setting.
- Five or more years of manager or higher-level leadership experience.
- Certification in Case Management is required within 6 months of hire.
- Strong hospital management skills, with expertise in case management, utilization review, discharge planning, home care, and/or managed care.
- Excellent leadership and fiscal management skills, with the ability to create a goal-oriented climate of teamwork, collaboration, and consistent achievement of objectives.
- Strong knowledge of relevant regulatory requirements, as well as related legislative, accreditation, licensing, and compliance environments.
- Strong competency in financial aspects of healthcare management, blended with an understanding of the ethical, medical, and quality of care issues of case management.
- Advanced communication, interpersonal, and conflict-resolution skills for dealing with patients, families, advocates, other medical and administrative personnel, subordinate staff, and personnel from outside agencies.
- Excellent abilities in critical thinking and problem-solving. Able to assess and evaluate department operations, produce and interpret reports, develop new policies, procedures, strategies, and implementation plans to improve all aspects of case management department function.

### Preferred Qualifications

- Advanced degree in nursing, health administration, or related field strongly preferred.
- Eight or more years of progressive leadership in Care Management is strongly preferred.
- Lean Six Sigma certification and experience leading Lean initiatives.
- Strong Data Analytics experience within a large, complex health system.
- Academic Medical Center experience.

## The Community

### La Jolla, California

La Jolla is widely regarded as one of Southern California's most spectacular coastal communities, often called the jewel of San Diego. Located about 12 miles north of downtown, it is defined by a dramatic seven-mile shoreline, rugged ocean bluffs, steep canyons, and hillsides that rise toward Mount Soledad. Since the late 1800s, La Jolla has attracted visitors and residents alike with its Mediterranean-style climate, exceptional weather, and stunning natural beauty. Its importance as a visitor destination has earned it designation under the California Coastal Act as a community of regional and statewide significance.

Despite being part of the City of San Diego, La Jolla retains a distinct small-town character and strong civic pride. Approximately 32,000 residents live within its 5,700 acres, centered around the Village, the Shores, and Bird Rock commercial districts. These areas offer upscale shopping and dining along Prospect Street and Girard Avenue, along with a walkable, village-style setting that blends coastal charm with an affluent lifestyle. Iconic landmarks such as the historic La Valencia Hotel add to the area's timeless appeal.



La Jolla is also a global center for education, science, and culture. It is home to the University of California, San Diego; the renowned Scripps Institution of Oceanography; the Birch Aquarium at Scripps; the La Jolla Playhouse; the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art; and the Mount Soledad National Veterans Memorial. These institutions contribute to a vibrant intellectual and cultural environment while reinforcing La Jolla's international reputation for innovation and the arts.

Outdoor recreation and natural experiences are central to life in La Jolla. Its world-famous beaches—such as La Jolla Cove and La Jolla Shores—are popular for snorkeling, diving, kayaking, and wildlife viewing, including the area's well-known sea lions and seals. Nearby attractions like Torrey Pines Golf Course and hiking trails at Mount Soledad offer additional outdoor pursuits, making La Jolla a unique blend of scenic beauty, cultural richness, and coastal sophistication.

### San Diego, California



California's second-largest city and the United States' eighth-largest, San Diego boasts a citywide population of nearly 1.4 million residents and more than 3 million residents countywide. Within its borders of 4,200 sq. miles, San Diego County encompasses 18 incorporated cities and numerous other charming neighborhoods and communities, including downtown's historic Gaslamp Quarter, Little Italy, Coronado, La Jolla, Del Mar, Carlsbad, Escondido, La

Mesa, Hillcrest, Barrio Logan, and Chula Vista, just to name a few.

San Diego is renowned for its idyllic climate, 70 miles of pristine beaches, and a dazzling array of world-class family attractions. Popular attractions include the world-famous San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park, SeaWorld San Diego, and LEGOLAND California.

In San Diego's East County, the terrain varies from gentle foothills to mile-high mountains and the historic mining town, Julian, down to the 600,000-acre Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, offering nature-conscious visitors endless opportunities to hike, camp, fish, observe wildlife, and much more. In San Diego's North County, the agricultural community produces quantities of flowers and magnificent produce. Wine growers are also making a mark by growing and harvesting quality grapes that become excellent wines, which are served at some of the most elegant restaurants and resorts in the region. Along the west, 70 miles of Pacific Ocean coastline not only supports year-round outdoor recreation, such as surfing, boating, sailing, and swimming, but also important scientific research at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. To the south, it's a whole different country, Mexico, featuring its own cultural offerings in various towns along the border and coastline, including Tijuana, Rosarito, and Ensenada.

San Diego's arts and culture and culinary arts are booming. The hottest new culinary arts talents prepare award-winning meals throughout the region's 6,400 eating establishments. Balboa Park, the largest urban cultural park in the U.S., is home to 15 museums, numerous art galleries, beautiful gardens, the Tony Award-winning Globe Theatres, and the famous San Diego Zoo.

San Diego County also features 92 golf courses and a variety of exciting participatory and spectator sports, beachfront resorts and luxury spas, gaming, a dynamic downtown district, annual special events and unique holiday offerings, multicultural festivals and celebrations, colorful neighborhoods and communities, a rich military history, and much more.

For more information on San Diego, please visit:

- [www.sandiego.org](http://www.sandiego.org)
- [www.sandiego.gov](http://www.sandiego.gov)
- [www.sdchamber.org](http://www.sdchamber.org)

## Procedure for Candidacy

Please submit all applications, nominations, and inquiries to the search team 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.

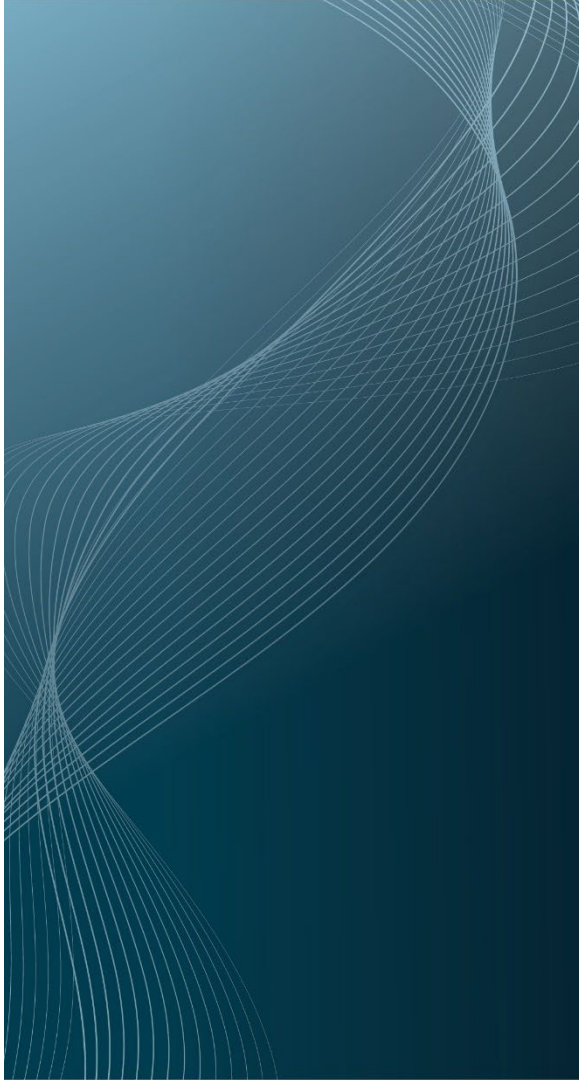
The salary range for this role is \$198,000 – \$252,000 with a bonus. The final hiring salary is commensurate with experience.

<p><b>April Allen</b> <b>Principal</b> <b>502-296-8066</b></p>	<p><b>Diane Smith, BSN, RN</b> <b>Principal</b> <b>267-210-9847</b></p>	<p><b>Brittany Amaral</b> <b>Associate</b> <b>401-536-5250</b></p>
--	---	--

*[Use client's EEO statement if provided.] «Company» 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 UC San Diego Health 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 attained from UC San Diego Health and/or are owned by Witt/Kieffer Inc. via Getty Images.



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**