

## Position Specification

Chair, Department of Microbiology



The University of Alabama at Birmingham



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# The Opportunity

## Position



**Chair, Department of Microbiology**

## Location



**Birmingham, AL**

## Reporting Relationship



**Dean, UAB Heersink School of Medicine & CEO UAB Health System/UAB/Ascension St. Vincent's Alliance**

## Website:

[www.uab.edu/medicine/home/](http://www.uab.edu/medicine/home/)  
[www.uab.edu/medicine/microbiology/](http://www.uab.edu/medicine/microbiology/)

## Position Summary

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine (UAB Heersink SOM) has undergone staggering transformation in recent years, strengthening its status and reputation as a leader in medical training, biomedical discovery and innovation, and patient care. As part of an elite group of eight academic medical centers that have attained more than \$100 million in net NIH funding growth over the past five years, the Heersink School of Medicine's NIH ranking has catapulted from No. 31 in 2014 to No. 21 among all schools and the top 10 for public medical schools. In addition, 12 departments are ranked among the top 20, including the Department of Microbiology which ranks No. 9. UAB recently received the single largest philanthropic commitment in university history with a gift of \$95 million. The gift will further enable opportunities for transformative impact in scientific discovery, training, and clinical care at UAB. Additionally, this gift will support the school's strategic growth and help recruit and retain the brightest scientists and physicians in priority areas through endowed chairs and professorships.

Integral to the success of the strategic transformation of UAB, will be the appointment of an innovative and highly collaborative academic leader to serve as their next Chair of the Department of Microbiology. UAB has initiated this national search in partnership with Korn Ferry.

The Chair reports to and works closely with the Dean of the Heersink School of Medicine & CEO of the UAB Health System and UAB/Ascension St. Vincent's Alliance, the Executive Vice Dean of the Heersink School of Medicine and the Senior Vice Dean for Research for the Heersink School of Medicine to guide the growth and development of the Department's highly respected education and research enterprises, taking full advantage of UAB's extraordinary faculty and resources. They will be responsible for directing the interdisciplinary programs that lead to the development and retention of top-tier researchers and will nurture a collaborative training environment with strong mentorship that fosters intellectual creativity

## Charge to the New Chair



*The new Chair will work with senior leadership to fulfill both UAB's and the department's commitment to improving human health by carrying out cutting-edge, fundamental basic and translational research and to educate and train the next generation of scientists, educators and entrepreneurs who will lead the fight against infectious and immune-mediated diseases.*

and instils passion in the next generation of scientists to perform fundamental basic and translational research. Further, The Chair will be tasked with fostering an environment of collaboration, integrity, trust, and transparency within the Department, as well as between the Department and UAB at large.

## Key Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the role.

- Provide strategic oversight and expertise for all aspects of the Department, including the positive representation of the Department;
- Foster a departmental culture that places a premium on impactful science;
- Expand and enhance the strength of the research programs within the Department by further cultivating an environment that supports team science through interdisciplinary collaborations;
- Build on existing strengths within the department as well as create new areas of research excellence through partnerships with other HSOM Departments and UAB Schools and Centers;
- Expand and strengthen collaborative opportunities and bridges across the institution as well as with community professionals;
- Provide open communication within the Department so that greater transparency can yield improved opportunities for Departmental success;
- Promote the recruitment, management, professional development, and retention of a diverse community of faculty and staff;
- Provide mentorship and support for the myriad scientific programs represented within the department through the development of a strong sense of teamwork, equity, and investment in the mission across all functional areas within the department;
- Continue the success of the undergraduate immunology major and work closely with the College of Arts and Sciences and its Department of Biology to excel in this endeavor;
- Ensure and steward the fiscal health of the Department;

## Department of Microbiology

The Department of Microbiology was established in 1945 and, up until 1954, consisted of three faculty members whose research was limited to anti-infectives. With the recruitment of immunologists including Dr. R. Hiramoto in 1966, the research focus of the department expanded to encompass both microbiology and immunology. Further recruitments, including Drs. [J. Mestecky](#) (1969), J. McGhee (1972) and [S. Michalek](#) (1979) led to the development of cutting edge programs in mucosal immunology that continue within the department and on the UAB campus to this day. The first PhD conferred at UAB was given in 1969 to [Dr. R. Acton](#), a graduate student in the Department of Microbiology and later faculty member. Since 1991, almost 300 students have been awarded PhD degrees in Microbiology.

The Department of Microbiology continued to grow throughout the next 30 years as the department built world-class programs in immunology, cancer biology, structural biology and biophysics, virology, microbial pathogenesis and genetics. For many years the UAB Department of Microbiology held the No. 1 ranking of all microbiology departments in the US for the largest number of NIH research, merit, and training grants.

Today, the UAB Department of Microbiology is still consistently ranked amongst the best microbiology departments in the country and is currently No. 9 for NIH funding, with faculty members holding more than 85 grants and \$19.5 million in extramural grant funding. The Department is a vibrant and highly collaborative research community consisting of nearly 200 individuals, made up of primary faculty and instructors, secondary and adjunct faculty, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows and trained technicians. Department members publish nearly 100 peer-reviewed manuscripts annually and faculty members serve on national advisory, foundation and journal editorial boards, as journal editors, and as members and chairs of NIH and foundation study sections. Faculty members are also involved in the education mission of UAB and the Heersink School of Medicine in their roles as directors and co-directors in the graduate themes and by teaching classes to undergraduate, graduate, and medical students. Department of Microbiology faculty are members and current leaders of university and school-wide centers, including the [O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center](#), the [Center for Clinical and Translational Science](#), [Center for AIDS Research](#), and the Microbiome Center. Thus, the faculty and the department actively serve the university mission of excellence in research, service, and teaching.

## **Education**

Since 1969, the Department of Microbiology has trained and educated graduate students, medical students, and postdoctoral fellows. Alumni have gone on to very distinguished careers in a variety of disciplines, including academic research, teaching, and biotechnology.

### *Undergraduate Education and Training*

The [UAB Undergraduate Immunology Program](#) was developed to provide an intensive, immunology-focused course of study and research opportunities for students interested pursuing careers in immunology and health-related professions, including medicine, biomedical research, science education, policy, and writing. The immunology major gives students the opportunity to learn about and contribute to research in the field of immunology earlier than other general degrees (such as biology and microbiology).

### *Graduate Education and Training*

Currently, graduate students trained in the department enter through the [UAB Graduate Biomedical Science Program](#) (GBS Program) or [Medical Scientist Training Program \(MSTP\)](#). These students can participate in multiple interdisciplinary thematic programs that integrate more than 25 departments and 20 research centers across the Heersink School of Medicine at UAB. Department of Microbiology faculty members currently direct two of the theme-based graduate programs, [Immunology](#) and [Microbiology](#). Although many of the students in the department enter through one of these two themes, both faculty and students participate in many of the other [GBS thematic programs](#). In 2017, the [AMC21 Scholar Program](#) was implemented to attract the top graduate student applicants to UAB and provides up to 8 awards per year to recruit the top candidates to the GBS.

### *Postdoctoral Training*

Postdoctoral fellows are hired by individual investigators. UAB has a very active [Office of Postdoctoral Education](#) that maintains a listing of current openings and organizes many career development programs for postdoctoral fellows. UAB consistently ranks highly in The Scientist poll of “Best Places to Work for Postdocs.”

## Research

Faculty in the Department of Microbiology have research programs in five broad yet interconnected areas:

- [Microbial Pathogenesis](#)
- [Immunology](#)
- [Virology](#)
- [Structural Biology & Biophysics](#)
- [Cancer](#)

UAB is well known for its collegial and interactive scientific culture. Microbiology faculty and students work synergistically with researchers in other departments and specialized research programs and [centers](#) across campus.

## University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine

UAB is training the next generation of physicians and physician-scientists, answering basic scientific questions that lead to medical innovations, and bringing the highest quality health care to all patients. As the heartbeat of Birmingham and an integral medical leader in the Southeast, UAB's Birmingham campus is within walking distance of some of the best parks, entertainment, and dining in the region. Regional campuses—in Huntsville, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa—expand UAB's academic reach and responsibilities in addition to educating physicians in rural and underserved areas of the state.

The school is made up of nearly 800 students, more than 1,000 residents, and 1,400 full-time faculty in 27 academic departments. The Heersink School of Medicine has nearly 1,300 faculty who attract more than \$250 million in NIH funding through 26 academic departments, some of which rank in the top 10 nationally.

UAB faculty are world renowned in research, education and clinical care. Many lead professional organizations, edit national and international journals, and publish groundbreaking research. As an academic health system, UAB is a major center for clinical and translational research. UAB is home of The Kirklin Clinic, a multi-disciplinary ambulatory facility; University Hospital, one of the largest academic hospitals in the country; and faculty members also serve the Children's of Alabama hospital.

## Vision, Culture, Mission & Values

The Heersink School of Medicine is dedicated to excellence in the education of physicians and scientists in all of the disciplines of medicine and biomedical investigation for careers in practice, teaching, and research. Central to this educational mission are the provision of outstanding medical care and services and the enhancement of new knowledge through clinical and basic biomedical research. We embrace the University of Alabama at Birmingham's commitment to creating an inclusive environment that values differing perspectives and experiences. This diversity is essential to fulfilling the enduring mission of our medical school and university enterprise.

# The University of Alabama at Birmingham

In 1969 Governor Albert Brewer announced the establishment of The University of Alabama System, with the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB) as one of three autonomous campuses. What followed was UAB's rapid ascent to global renown, a singular story in higher education. UAB has since become a leader among comprehensive public urban research universities with academic medical centers. In its short history, the University has steadily and dramatically expanded its facilities, resources, and faculty to become an internationally recognized research entity.

With a bold and audacious vision, this fledgling university on a shoe-string budget has transformed into an international powerhouse in education, research and scholarship, and patient care. Over the past five decades, UAB would grow from 560 faculty members to 2,300 today, from 5,300 students to nearly 22,000, from 4,800 employees to more than 23,000, from 15 city blocks to 100, from an operating budget of \$49 million to more than \$3 billion, and from \$18 million in research expenditures to more than \$600 million.

At the same time, UAB's physical campus has grown from what was once regarded as a "commuter campus" into one of the most vibrant, state-of-the-art and sustainable campuses in the nation. The UAB campus is now home to some 4,000 trees and driven by leading-edge IT, including a supercomputer that is among the five fastest in the Southeast. All this growth and success has resulted from that same culture of collaboration and innovation that launched UAB and remains to this day.

A key asset in UAB's robust research program is Southern Research, a UAB-affiliate that provides a state-of-the-art platform for basic, applied and contract research. The Innovation Depot, a business incubation program undertaken in conjunction with the regional business community, focuses on the development of emerging biotechnology/life science, information technology, and service businesses. Also, the affiliated Hudson Alpha Institute for Biotechnology is a genomics-oriented research institute based in Huntsville whose faculty have adjunct UAB appointments.

In addition, investigators draw on the University for Tech Transfer Services to support commercialization of UAB discoveries. As the principal business driver of regional economic activity, UAB is also an active participant in the Birmingham Business Alliance which seeks diverse economic development across the region.

The University of Alabama is a student-centered research university and an academic community united in its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Alabamians. UAB offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees in Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Health Professions, Nursing and Public Health. UAB's first-professional schools are Dentistry, Medicine and Optometry.

## **Vision, Mission, Shared Values**

At UAB, we have never settled on merely finding what's next—we have helped build the future through new ideas and initiatives in the classroom, the laboratory, the studio and the clinic. UAB's vision, mission and shared values provide a foundation for the strategic plan, [Forging the Future](#).

## Vision

One university inspiring and empowering the creation of knowledge that changes the world.

## Mission

UAB serves students, patients, the community and the global need for discovery, knowledge dissemination, education, creativity and the application of ground-breaking solutions. We are a leader among comprehensive public urban research universities with academic medical centers.

## Shared Values

**Integrity** – We act ethically and do what is right.

**Respect** – We treat others with courtesy and civility.

**Diversity and inclusiveness** – Everybody counts, every day. We actively seek varied perspectives in our decision-making.

**Collaboration** – We trust each other and work cooperatively across disciplinary boundaries in the spirit of shared governance.

**Excellence and achievement** – We constantly innovate, solve problems and improve ourselves and others through learning.

**Stewardship** – Fiscal and environmental sustainability guide our decisions.

**Accountability** – We are answerable to each other and act with the best interests of the university in mind.

Our vision, mission and values provide a framework and common language for collaboration and strategic goals that will build on our strong foundation. We serve students and patients while recognizing that we are also embedded in a vibrant community.

## Points of Pride

- The University of Alabama at Birmingham has been named **America's No. 1 Best Large Employer** (2021) by Forbes, topping the list of more than 500 public and private corporations, hospitals, universities, Fortune 500 companies and more, across dozens of industries.
- **Named America's No. 1 Best Employer for Diversity** among colleges and universities by Forbes in 2021.
- **\$648 million in research awards** (FY2021), continuing the most successful period of research funding in UAB history with 43% growth in awards in the past five years. UAB ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> in federal research funding, which is 17<sup>th</sup> among public universities.

- **Ranked 1st in the U.S. and 7th globally for community outreach** around health and well-being by Time Higher Education.
- **8th largest hospital in the U.S.** (and 3rd largest public), home to the state's only Level 1 Adult Trauma Center and only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center in Alabama and a four-state region.
- UAB's new **Proton Therapy Center** is one of 36 in the US and the first in Alabama.

## Experiences and Professional Qualifications

### Experience and professional qualifications required for the role.

- Ph.D., M.D. or M.D./ Ph.D.
- Academic rank of Associate or Full Professor.
- Accomplished leader with significant scholarly accomplishments and recognition in the fields of Microbiology, Virology and/or Immunology, academic scholarship, education and administration.
- Academic credentials consistent with the stature of this position, including a strong track record of success in extramurally funded research.
- Substantial experience as a faculty member in a distinguished academic or comparable medical setting. An established record of effective, strong, and collaborative leadership in a school of medicine or related health sciences complex.
- The capacity to formulate and articulate a shared vision, to persuade a wide range of audiences of its value, and to engage others in its implementation.
- Strong track record of leadership in an academic medical center. Proven experience in providing leadership, oversight, and strategic direction in an academic medical center.
- Excellent organizational skills and analytical ability.
- Strong ability to work collaboratively with leaders of various backgrounds and interests.
- Competency navigating the multiple and oftentimes competing priorities of the tripartite educational, research, and service missions of a complex academic medical center.
- A foundation in financial management with the ability to make sound judgments; ability to develop and implement the budget effectively, aligning resources with strategic priorities.
- Solid vision for building a top-ranked Department of Microbiology.
- Ability to recruit outstanding new faculty in basic and translational research as well as retain UAB's strongest faculty.
- Demonstrated commitment to and knowledge about diversity, equity, and inclusion as critical components of academic excellence.

### Leadership Characteristics

- Outstanding interpersonal and communication skills.
- Exhibits a style that supports change and innovation, with an ability to delegate yet maintain overall control.
- Commitment to the educational, research, and service missions of the Department, the Heersink SOM and UAB.
- A genuine appreciation for consultation and collaboration. Personal style that fosters and supports innovation.

## Procedure for Candidacy

The search committee will begin reviewing candidates immediately and will continue until the position is filled. Applications should include a detailed curriculum vitae and a letter of interest that highlight the applicant's personal vision and relevant leadership experience. To ensure full consideration, inquiries, nominations, and applications should be submitted electronically in confidence, to [uab-microbiology@kornferry.com](mailto:uab-microbiology@kornferry.com)

*UAB is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Employer committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and family-friendly environment in which all faculty and staff can excel and achieve work/life balance irrespective of race, national origin, age, genetic or family medical history, gender, faith, gender identity and expression as well as sexual orientation. UAB also encourages applications from individuals with disabilities and veterans.*

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