



# AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

## Vice President for Human Resources

Leadership Profile

September 2021



*WittKieffer*

## Executive Summary

[Augusta University](#) (AU) invites nominations and applications for a strategic, collaborative and innovative leader to serve as the next Vice President for Human Resources (VPHR).

Augusta University is a public research university and medical center, located in Augusta Georgia, dedicated to training the next generation of innovators, leaders and health care providers. It is one of only four public research universities in the state of Georgia and the only one with a nationally recognized academic health center. Augusta offers 160 degrees across 10 colleges and schools and has campuses and off-site instructional programs throughout the state.

Under the leadership of President Brooks Keel, Augusta University has expanded academic offerings and campus infrastructure, including the founding of the [School of Computer and Cyber Sciences](#) and the creation of the [Augusta University Cyber Institute](#). The University has expanded campus housing by opening its first on-campus undergraduate and graduate [residence halls](#), increased [undergraduate enrollment](#) by more than 22%, and developed a comprehensive plan to relocate the University's [College of Science and Mathematics](#) to a new facility on the Health Sciences Campus.

Reporting to the Executive Vice President for Operations, the VPHR leads the day-to-day management and strategic planning initiatives of the enterprise-wide [human resources function](#), supporting an employee base of approximately 11,000, across both Augusta University and [Augusta University Health](#) which is a world-class, not-for-profit health care network, offering the most comprehensive primary, specialty, and subspecialty care in the region. The VPHR will also foster and enhance AU's relationship, coordination and partnership with the University [System of Georgia](#) (USG) Office of Human Resources.

This is a unique opportunity to join a dynamic University and health system during a time of momentous growth, with the [2022 strategic planning project](#) underway and a community who possesses great pride in honoring a "culture of care" for employees. The successful candidate will have a collaborative and customer oriented leadership style; a history of executive level leadership experience and accomplishment within a similarly complex environment, preferably within a major research university with a medical center relationship; the ability to work with senior leaders, faculty and professional staff colleagues regarding key organizational, management, and human capital strategies; the capacity to lead and develop a best in class human resources organization, and to be a strategic partner who has successfully led in environments that value operational effectiveness, superior customer service, and align culture and behavior with strategy, aspirations and values. The VPHR will be accessible, connected and engaged with employees in both the University as well as the medical center and focused on contemporary human resource delivery.

Minimum qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree with a strong preference for an advanced degree and/or other relevant professional accomplishments in the fields of human resources and human capital strategy supplemented by at least 10 years of progressive experience as a leader of a human resources function at a large, complex entity – strong preference for knowledge of the higher education environment and familiarity with the complexities of research intensive and medical center environments, and a demonstrated expertise in strategic human resources planning.

For information on how to apply or to submit nominations, please refer to the section, "Procedure for Candidacy" on page 13.

## The Role

Reporting to the Executive Vice President for Operations, the Vice President for Human Resources (VPHR) is expected to serve as a strategic partner and to provide leadership and foster consultative collaborations across the University and Augusta Health to help fulfill Augusta University's mission and strategic goals.

The VPHR will lead the day-to-day management and strategic planning initiatives of the enterprise-wide human resource function including but not limited to personnel policies, human resources program management, employee relations, organizational development, succession planning, employee engagement and human resource systems development and support.

This position is responsible for leading a dedicated human resources team of approximately 85 staff members, who support an employee base of approximately 11,000 including more than 1,600 faculty, and approximately 7,700 full time and 1,400 part time staff across the University and AU Health. The VPHR will be accessible, connected and engaged with employees in both the University as well as the medical center and focused on contemporary human resource delivery.

### Objectives

- Serve as a strategic senior advisor and human capital expert to the Executive Vice President for Operations and other members of the senior leadership team on leadership development and talent management; including the development of strategic recruiting and retention plans, succession planning, organizational development and human resource best practices to further distinguish the University and the AU Health as employers of choice.
- Promote effective employee services and programs that align with AU's strategic vision and effectively articulating their importance in supporting evolving needs of a dynamic workforce.
- Develop, lead and evaluate a team of professionals with the goal of maintaining a high level of credibility as an effective and responsive consultative partners that best serves the needs of varied constituents across a multi-campus research institution.
- Foster and enhance AU's relationship, coordination and partnership with the University System of Georgia (USG) Office of Human Resources.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as University, medical center and University System of Georgia policies and practices pertaining to human resource management.
- Provide leadership to advance policies, programs and processes that promote shared responsibility for constructive human relations across multiple campuses in a vibrant, diverse work environment.
- Promote and advocate for a culture of diversity and inclusion, and ensuring that Human Resources is actively engaged in conversations, processes and programs that increase and provide greater opportunity for underrepresented group and foster a culture of belonging.

- Use creativity and new ideas to think beyond traditional HR models to consider entrepreneurial processes, systems and solutions to challenges in a highly complex human resources environment.

## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The position has both significant scope and complexity. Beyond the day-to-day leadership of the human resources function, the VPHR will be charged with addressing the following:

### **Continue to elevate the HR function's brand across the organization**

The VPHR has a leadership role in creating, implementing and operationalizing a vision and strategic plan for human resources that charts a path for the future and further establishes the function as a value-added resource for all parts of the organization. The leader's vision will aim to leverage the strengths of the existing division and further develop an operation characterized by efficiency, accessibility, responsiveness and best practices to achieve optimal customer service and human resources employee productivity.

As a result, the division will embody excellence at every level and reflect a strategic service orientation and continue to foster a culture of care within the community. Key initiatives will include ensuring human resources solidifies a reputation of trust, absolute confidence, consistency and equity and serves as a strategic resource to all parts of the organization. The VPHR will lead enhancement efforts in hiring practices, communications, process efficiencies, workforce development and succession planning, among others.

The VPHR will use this elevated standing a platform for connecting with organizational partners in a manner that is consistent across the University as well as the medical center and enhances the credibility and brand of the human resources function. Through this process, the VPHR will determine and communicate appropriate points of contact within the unit, so employees in all parts of the organization will know who to ask for help. The human resources division will anticipate and celebrate beneficial change and respond effectively and proactively to the evolving needs of the organization.

### **Advance HR's relationship with AU Health**

The VPHR will be highly visible throughout the organization and will develop the necessary personal credibility to play a critical role in strengthening consultative partnership the function provides to AU Health, which is one of the largest health systems in the state of Georgia. Balancing the needs of the University with the medical center will require proactive engagement to cross the formal and informal boundaries that exist between the organizations to ensure equitable partnership and collaboration. Supporting medical center leadership, managers and supervisors, and advocating for employees has never been more important, especially in an environment where healthcare employment is so competitive, in demand and necessary to support our communities. The medical center leadership, staff and community members will welcome a strong advocate and arbiter as well as a compassionate and empathetic leader in the next VPHR and one who implements innovative strategies and approaches to increase communication, employee engagement and retention during this time of growth. The successful VPHR will establish a culture of open communication, trust and compliance throughout the organization.

**Empower, develop and champion the HR Team**

The VPHR will inherit a dedicated team with a deep commitment to AU's mission. As such, the VPHR will be charged with ensuring that the human resources team delivers high-level strategic support and fosters a culture of engagement and excellence and a commitment to developing and nurturing a climate of care across the organization. The new leader will honor and recognize the function's development and accomplishments in recent years, while empowering and inspiring the team to elevate their strengths in service delivery. The VPHR will have the opportunity to inspire, delegate as appropriate, and bring a strong commitment to providing mentoring and professional development.

**Advance Augusta University as an employer of choice**

Augusta University's leadership is committed to enabling the new VPHR to develop progressive and supportive programs and policies to advance both the University and the medical center as "employers of choice." As such, the VPHR will play a leadership role in the efforts to assess opportunities to provide employees with competitive compensation programs and experiences to retain talent and to foster a culture of development and career progression.

Included in these efforts will be the charge to assess, refine and maintain a compensation program to keep pace with market demands for employees; especially at the entry level or at the lower pay band levels, as well as in the clinical environments and ensure equity in employee compensation practices; to devise measurable recruitment strategies to attract diverse talent in a highly competitive market; to conduct analysis of succession needs, leadership readiness, training, promotions, turnover and staffing metrics; and to foster a culture of coaching, learning and development including programmatic continuous development and training management level staff.

**Professional Qualities and Personal Characteristics**

The ideal candidate will possess the following qualifications, experience and personal characteristics.

**Education**

Minimum qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree with a strong preference for an advanced degree and/or other relevant professional accomplishment in the fields of human resources and human capital strategy.

**Experience**

- At least 10 years of progressive experience as a leader of a human resources function at a large, complex entity – strong preference for knowledge of the higher education environment and familiarity with the complexities of a research intensive institution and medical center, and a demonstrated expertise in strategic human resources planning.
- Proven track record of building and leading a best in class human resource organization with a superior understanding of human resource strategies in institutions of higher education and/or other organizations of similar size and complexity, with an emphasis on research universities and preferably with medical centers.

- Current knowledge of human resources regulations and the complexities and nuances of employment law; experience with and knowledge of the State of Georgia employment laws preferred.
- Demonstrated strategic planning skills and experience with budget and fiscal management, staff leadership and management, and team building.
- Proven ability to manage both big picture and operational details: evidence of ability to lead an organization to achieve strategic goals, to continuously refine organizational plans, structure and operations; to be comfortable with delegating day-to-day management and decision making to senior managers with accountability.
- Strong listening, verbal and written communication skills and an ability to effectively communicate in both small and large group settings.
- Demonstrated experience with and commitment to diversity and inclusion of employees across all levels of the institution.
- Proven track record of innovation in policy and program deployment, management, and technical expertise in human resource functions; especially employee benefits, personnel policies, compensation programs, and HR information systems.
- Demonstrated success in change management in a dynamic environment with an appreciation for the missions, tradition and culture of the institution.
- Ability to foster strong relationships with academic administrators, campus leaders, and other key stakeholders.
- Demonstrated success at leading change and promoting a service-oriented and people-centered human resource function.

### **Personal Characteristics**

- Ability to foster strong relationships with academic administrators, campus leaders, directors of and other key stakeholders.
- A values system that aligns with a highly collaborative, transparent and mission driven organization.
- Fair, compassionate, and open-minded with an ability to embrace and promote change; innovative, flexible, and creative; open to new ideas.
- Good judgment and strong problem solving skills; approaches problem solving with an entrepreneurial perspective.
- Calm, professional and politically sensitive; willing and able to serve as a confidential advisor/confidante to executive leadership and others; comfortable with and an ability to make unpopular decisions and the ability to maintain highly sensitive and confidential information.
- Unquestionable integrity coupled with strong management skills and the managerial courage to take a firm stand or apply a gentle touch as a situation dictates; values quality with high standards for self and others.

- Visible, accessible and approachable; able to relate effectively with all levels of staff, faculty, management and executives, including the system office and multi-site locations.
- Relationship and bridge builder; ability to work well and develop strong connections with colleagues internally and across the system.
- Confident and inspires confidence in others.
- High energy, upbeat personality with a passion for the mission of Augusta University.
- Willing to be a hands-on manager and leader, when appropriate, with a keen focus on results approach.
- Promotes inclusion and diversity; able to work effectively with a highly diverse workforce and represent the interests of a diverse community of faculty, staff and students.

## About Augusta University

Augusta University is a public research university and medical center dedicated to training the next generation of innovators, leaders and health care providers. It is one of only four public research universities in the state of Georgia and the only one with a nationally recognized academic health center. Augusta offers 160 degrees across 10 colleges and schools and has campuses and off-site instructional programs throughout the state. More than 1,700 full- and part-time faculty are dedicated to the teaching, mentoring, scholarship, and service of approximately 9,274 students, including 5,500 undergraduates. Graduate, pre-professional, and undergraduate students alike have opportunities to engage in independent and faculty-led research. The University's nearly \$100 million research enterprise reflects a longstanding commitment to improving and enriching the human experience, particularly in the biomedical sciences.

## History

Augusta University was founded on December 10, 1828, as the Medical Academy of Georgia and renamed the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) five years later. As the city of Augusta grew and expanded over the centuries to meet the needs of the community, other institutions were born, each creating its own legacy. In 1996, Augusta College became Augusta State University. In 2011, MCG became Georgia Health Sciences University to reflect its broad mission across the health sciences. In 2013, building on their respective legacies, Georgia Health Sciences University and Augusta State University became one. In December 2015, that institution became Augusta University.

## Mission and Vision

Augusta University provides leadership and excellence in teaching, discovery, clinical care, and service as a student-centered comprehensive research university and academic health center with a wide range of programs from learning assistance through postdoctoral studies. Its vision is to be a top-tier university that is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity, and innovation.

## Values

- Collegiality — reflected in collaboration, partnership, sense of community, and teamwork.

- Compassion — reflected in caring, empathy, and social responsibility.
- Excellence — reflected in distinction, effectiveness, efficiency, enthusiasm, passion, and quality.
- Inclusivity — reflected in diversity, equality, fairness, impartiality, and respect.
- Integrity — reflected in accountability, ethical behavior, honesty, and reliability.
- Leadership — reflected in courage, honor, professionalism, transparency, and vision.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Augusta University is committed to enhancing inclusive excellence, promoting equity, and cultivating a welcoming environment for all students, faculty and staff. The [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) (ODI), in partnership with other offices, academic units and senior leadership, works to foster an environment that celebrates diversity and provides equitable access to opportunity, cultural humility and responsiveness, and a culture of respect, trust and empowerment through transparency, open communication, and collaborative working relationships that extend beyond the campus to Augusta's surrounding communities.

## Colleges and Schools

Augusta University comprises 10 colleges and schools:

- [College of Allied Health Sciences](#)
- [School of Computer and Cyber Sciences](#)
- [Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
- [James M. Hull College of Business](#)
- [Dental College of Georgia](#)
- [College of Education](#)
- [The Graduate School](#)
- [College of Nursing](#)
- [College of Science and Mathematics](#)
- [Medical College of Georgia](#)

### College of Allied Health Sciences

The College of Allied Health Sciences trains and educates today's health care professionals: the therapists, technicians, administrators, managers, and assistants who are the backbone of the nation's health care workforce.

### School of Computer and Cyber Sciences

Founded in 2017, Augusta's newest school provides state-of-the-art education and research across computer science, information technology, and cybersecurity. The school has quickly become a leader in community outreach and engagement, with strong contributions to the nation's military, the state, and private and public sector organizations.

**Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

As the heart of Augusta University's liberal arts mission, the college fosters critical thinking about complex questions of the human experience. It cultivates skills in written, verbal, and creative expression; promotes active citizenship and community engagement; and prepares graduates for diverse careers in our global society.

**James M. Hull College of Business**

The College of Business advances the future of business and its workforce through high-quality business education, distinctive academic programs, and experiential learning opportunities.

**Dental College of Georgia**

The only dental school in Georgia, the Dental College of Georgia educates the next generation of oral health care providers by offering hands-on education through innovative research, patient care, and service.

**College of Education**

Through an array of degrees and professional development programs, the College of Education cultivates innovative educational leaders, advances health practices through kinesiology research, and explores the most important questions in public education, share exciting ideas and best practices across the world.

**The Graduate School**

The Graduate School prepares successful and innovative leaders, scholars, researchers, educators, and clinicians to advance their fields and make a positive impact on their communities and the world. Small class sizes enable a dedicated faculty to cultivate and model supportive and collegial relationships with students.

**College of Nursing**

Georgia's largest school of nursing provides leadership through excellent and innovative nursing education, research, practice, and service to promote the health, healing and well-being of individuals, families, and diverse communities across Georgia and the nation.

**College of Science and Mathematics**

The college provides students with strong foundations in the sciences as well as preparation for careers, citizenship, and lifelong learning. Faculty provide experiences that promote scientific inquiry and discovery and are dedicated to creating opportunities for students' intellectual growth and community involvement.

## Medical College of Georgia

The Medical College of Georgia is the state's only public medical school and the eighth-largest in the nation. Anchored in Augusta and with [regional clinical campuses](#) throughout Georgia, MCG has more than 2,500 voluntary clinical faculty throughout the state committed to health care and education, discovery, and service.



## Campuses

Augusta University has four campus locations, in Athens, Albany, Rome and Savannah.

The **Health Sciences Campus** is at the forefront of health care innovation. Located in beautiful downtown Augusta, the Health Sciences Campus is home to the Medical College of Georgia; the College of Nursing; the comprehensive College of Allied Health Sciences; The Graduate School; The Dental College of Georgia; and the state's only public academic medical center.

The historic **Summerville Campus**, built-in and around a former United States arsenal, is home to the Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the nationally-ranked Hull College of Business, the College of Education, and the College of Science and Mathematics. The curricula of these colleges are designed to train students for a lifetime of critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurial success.

Nestled along the Savannah River, the **Riverfront Campus** is located in Augusta's growing cybersecurity corridor, providing close proximity to industry professionals and innovative startups. The campus is home to the Georgia Cyber Center, which includes the University's School of Computer and Cyber Sciences as well as a cutting-edge cyber range, 340-seat auditorium, secure briefing space, and incubator for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The **Forest Hills Campus** houses the College of Education's Department of Kinesiology and the University's Department of Athletics. The Christenberry Fieldhouse is located on the Forest Hills Campus along with baseball, softball, and soccer fields and a full-size golf course that serves as the home of the nationally recognized NCAA Division I Jaguars golf team.

## Health System

Augusta University Health is a world-class, not-for-profit health care network, offering the most comprehensive primary, specialty, and subspecialty care in the region. As an academic health center, Augusta University Health differs from community hospitals with its three primary missions of patient care, education, and research. While providing a full range of clinical services, the system maintains an infrastructure to foster education and research. The system's health care professionals benefit from cutting-edge knowledge and training, cultivating the next generation of caregivers and pioneering innovative research that improves medical diagnosis, treatments, and technology.

Augusta University's extensive and integrated academic health center includes Augusta University Health System, Augusta University Medical Center, Augusta University Medical Associates, and the Children's Hospital of Georgia. Augusta University Health provides skilled, compassionate care to its patients, conducts leading-edge clinical research, and fosters the medical education and training of tomorrow's health care practitioners.

## University Leadership



**Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D.**, took office as Augusta University's president in July 2015. He previously served as president of Georgia Southern University. Before that, he held senior appointments at Louisiana State University, where he served as vice chancellor for research and economic development, the University of Kansas–Wichita and Florida State University.

During years as a [basic science and clinical researcher](#), Keel served as principal investigator or co-principal investigator on externally funded grants and contracts totaling more than \$26 million. He is the author of 65 peer-reviewed scientific publications, 78 peer-reviewed abstracts, 19 book chapters and has edited four books in the areas of reproductive medicine and biology.

An internationally recognized expert in reproductive medicine, Keel is a member of the [Society for the Study of Reproduction](#), the [American Society for Reproductive Medicine](#), and the [Society for Gynecologic Investigation](#), among others. He has served on numerous boards, including the American Board of Bioanalysis, the American Association of Bioanalysts Board of Registry, the Oak Ridge Associated Universities, the Southeastern Universities Research Association, and the Executive Committee of the Council on Research Policy and Graduate Education of APLU.

Keel earned a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Augusta College in 1978, and a doctorate in reproductive endocrinology from the Medical College of Georgia in 1982. A graduate of both of Augusta University's legacy institutions, Keel worked for 20 years as a professor and researcher before moving into administration.



**Dr. Karla Leeper** currently serves as the Executive Vice President for Operations at Augusta University/AU Health. And she reports directly to the [President](#) and is a key member of the [President's Executive Cabinet](#). Dr. Leeper manages and provides leadership for critical Operations which support the mission and strategic priorities of Augusta University, including: [Facilities Services](#), [Auxiliary Services](#), [Human Resources](#), and [Communications and Marketing \(DCM\)](#).

Prior to coming to Augusta University she served as a tenured faculty member, vice president for board and executive affairs, and chief of staff to the president at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Dr. Leeper currently serves as the chair of the board of the Augusta Players and the chair of the board of the Augusta Museum of History. Dr. Leeper received a bachelor's degree in political science and communication studies from the University of Iowa, and doctorate in Communication Studies from the University of Kansas.

## Augusta, Georgia

Augusta University is located in Augusta, Georgia's second-oldest and second-largest city, situated on the southern banks of the Savannah River. Serving as a halfway point between the Appalachian Mountains to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Augusta is a vibrant, progressive, and livable community built on a solid foundation of local pride and artistic eccentricity. Affectionately known as the South's Garden City, Augusta extends Southern hospitality and world-class offerings in culture, food, entertainment, sports, and outdoor amenities, which allow for year-round adventures.

These offerings, coupled with its low cost of living, make Augusta the city of choice for more than half of a million people in its metropolitan area. Most notably, Augusta is world-renowned as home to the prestigious Masters Tournament, the only major golf championship that is played at the same course each year.



## Procedure for Candidacy

Applicants should provide a CV and a letter of interest that addresses the themes in this leadership profile. Candidates will be considered until an appointment is made. Application materials can be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#). Confidential nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Mercedes Chacón Vance and Sarah Miller  
[AugustaVPHR@wittkieffer.com](mailto:AugustaVPHR@wittkieffer.com)

*Augusta University is an equal opportunity employer and, in compliance with federal and state laws and university policy, is committed to providing equal educational and employment opportunities for all persons without regard to age, color, national origin, race, religion, disability, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Individuals from traditionally underrepresented populations are encouraged to apply.*

# Appendix I

## Human Resources Organizational Structure – 10/1/21

