

# *Pediatric Insight*

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## **CareerPhysician Child Health Advisory Council Proves Impact of Its Unique Transformative Leadership Recruitment and Development Process**

**Would the integration of academic pediatric thought leaders partnered with experienced executive search professionals prove beneficial to the advancement and support of academic leadership?**

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All child health organizations, including schools of medicine, academic departments and children's hospitals, periodically require external evaluation of leader performance and leadership recruitment needs, especially at times of transition. External department or division evaluations are traditionally initiated by an invitation from the unit leader for a person, or more commonly, a team of impartial nationally recognized physician leaders, to visit the institution and provide insights into the unit's strengths and any performance gaps. When a leadership search is tied to this evaluation, their report often guides institutional expectations and a search committee's charge for the desired candidates. However, it is uncommon for an academic review team to interact with or maintain a relationship with the search committee or future leadership appointees following the review. That's what makes the new CareerPhysician concept so unique.

Traditionally, complex pediatric leadership searches, especially for the often limited available workforce in pediatric subspecialties, are contracted with executive search professionals. These professionals support the academic search committees, vet potential candidates and coordinate the committee's engagement with candidates. Such professional collaboration has often proven invaluable; however, it is quite uncommon for the search firm professionals to interact or maintain communication with any external review teams who may have completed their reports prior to the launch of the search. Furthermore, once a candidate has been successfully appointed to their new leadership position, the relationship between the child health unit and the search professionals ends and rarely is there any interaction of the newly appointed leader with the academic review team that completed the program review.

All new academic leaders, regardless of past experience or level in an organization, face new challenges and situations that are unexpected and/or stressful. Many institutions provide some internal mentorship or coaching, as do a number of professional societies for newly appointed leaders including some specifically targeted to emerging pediatric leaders. While these are important and valuable resources, it is often difficult for a leader to find impartial peer advisors who are not potentially competing for resources at the department, school or national level. Moreover, individual advisor relationships often are not expected to be sustained over an extended time period. While professional coaches are sometimes engaged to provide support for new leaders, most often these professionals are focusing exclusively on leadership behaviors and lack personal experience in dealing with the complex issues facing academic leaders in their daily activities. Furthermore, peer advisors and professional coaches often lack insights into the leader's new home environment and available resources. The continuity of the Child Health Advisor's conducting an initial review through recruitment and appointment offers valuable coaching perspectives that might be unavailable to other advisors/coaches.

CareerPhysician has developed a novel concept of partnering experienced academic physician leaders with the resources of executive search and coaching professionals to accomplish the goal of supporting transformational leaders in child health. This concept grew from discussions between Wesley Millican and Dr. Bruder Stapleton concerning how experienced physician leaders could continue to contribute to the future of pediatrics following transitions from their senior leadership positions. From those discussions arose the concept of a partnership between business leaders and successful academic leaders who have been in the trenches and have confronted many of the challenges of academic pediatrics, including leadership and program deficit, program evaluation, advisement of a search firms, supporting candidates and providing post appointment counseling and coaching. CareerPhysician's process has effectively harnessed the full strength of thought leader engagement through the entirety of the leadership transition process and in doing so eliminated many of the deficits of traditional practices. As the concept evolved, an opportunity to work with an excellent pediatric department and children's hospital allowed us to test the idea of this unique approach to leadership recruitment and development. The following case study describes this experience and has encouraged us that this unique model may offer new approaches to academic pediatric institutions.

### **University of Oklahoma, Department of Pediatrics Case Study:**

The newly appointed department chair at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, Dr. Morris Gessouroun, was confronted with several significant leadership retirements and multiple division leadership vacancies at the same time that the academic health system was changing ownership. As the department chair and president of the children's hospital considered a strategic direction to advance the department and its leadership, Wesley Millican and CareerPhysician were engaged to coordinate an advisory team to evaluate the various division needs, advise the search committee and search professionals, support candidates during their recruitment and finally to serve as advisors/coaches after their appointment.

With leadership initiatives identified in neonatology, nephrology, hematology/oncology, endocrinology, critical care and pulmonary medicine, CareerPhysician then matched advisors based on specialty expertise and their experience as chiefs and chairs to preform independent reviews of the programs. Three of the reviews, endocrinology, nephrology and neonatology were able to be conducted concomitantly which proved to have added benefit as each reviewer added additional context to the reviews when they were presented to the department chair and

hospital administration. Unique to the CareerPhysician process, the search executive was also present for the reviews and focused on search committee preparation and obtaining an appropriate sense of the culture so as to enhance candidate identification and engagement.

Division reviews included interviews with faculty, staff, fellows, the Department Chair and Hospital administration. A verbal report was provided on the second day and a written report to the Chair was submitted promptly in the form of a SWOT analysis. Each report was written with three goals: 1) Inform the search committee about the qualities and skills best suited for the division's leadership position 2) Advise the department and institution as to the resources required to support a successful the recruitment. 3) Provide cultural insight and advisement to the CareerPhysician search executive.

Following the advisors' visit, the department initiated formal searches utilizing Career Physician's Child Health executive search practice. The Council's Advisors provided support to the relevant search committee as well as expertise to the search professionals. Advisors suggested names of potential candidates to the committee and were available to candidates during the search process. In the recruitment of the neonatology division chief, the successful candidate was not one of those suggested by the Advisor; however, ongoing dialogue between the Advisor and the candidate during the search proved valuable to both the candidate and the department. The advisor was able to obtain candidate insights that proved crucial to the search. In addition, the new division chief found that the redacted SWOT Analysis completed by the Advisor provided useful direction in outlining the vision and resource plan necessary to address the clinical and academic priorities of the program. During the successful recruit for a nephrology chief, the Advisor identified three candidates who were actively pursued by the department's search committee. The successfully recruited nephrology division chief communicated with the Advisor during the search and following subsequent recruitment visits. The lead candidate was able to obtain feedback for their vision presentation and obtain guidance on potential resource plans and strategies to address concerns outlined in the SWOT analysis and vetted during the interview process.

Following the recruitment of the neonatology chief, numerous conversations continued between the advisor and the newly appointed chief that supported a successful transition to this new leadership position. Similar engagement is planned for the nephrology chief, endocrinology and hematology/oncology recruitments that are underway. All final negotiations between candidates and the chair were concluded with the advice of the CareerPhysician search professionals but did not include the external academic advisors.

During the engagement with the specialty advisors, the department chair and hospital chief executive developed a trusting relationship with the external academic advisors. After receiving the advisor reports, the chair requested a coaching relationship with one of the advisors. Several telephone calls were subsequently scheduled to discuss challenges during this unprecedented time. The chair, Dr. Gessouroun, comments, "Mr. Millican and the Child Health Advisory Council are instrumental partners in our search and leadership development initiatives. Through our partnership we have successfully completed department reviews, recruited transformational leaders and engaged in critical coaching initiatives, all of which have positioned our programs for many years of success. The strategic partnership and wisdom provided by CareerPhysician and the Child Health Advisory Council, during our times of transition, has provided invaluable support to new leaders and our organization as a whole. CareerPhysician's longstanding commitment to academic pediatrics and appreciation for our unique challenges is

second to none. This novel approach for evaluation, recruitment and mentoring would be of benefit to any academic department seeking to identify and develop new leaders.”

### **Summary:**

As Chair and a founding member of the CareerPhysician Child Health Advisory Council, it has been an inspiring opportunity to work with emerging leaders and to partner with an exceptional group of advisors. Our combined leadership experience at some of the most prestigious institutions expands over 100 years. Each of us on the advisory board are enthusiastic about continuing to contribute to the field of pediatrics.

This case study demonstrates how a comprehensive partnership with experienced academic physician leaders and leadership consulting professionals can not only support recruitment of the appropriate and informed candidates, but also provide support to facilitate a newly appointed leader’s success—and hopefully retention. CareerPhysician with their advisory council for child health now offers this opportunity. While each divisional search had specific leadership, clinical and academic needs, the advisors (with their experience) were able to contribute to many broad topic areas of interest including: building philanthropy expertise, understanding institutional funds flows and the importance of metrics and productivity goals, strategy for institutional academic investment, approaches to building successful research programs and best practices in institutional program building.

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The Child Health Advisory Council is an advisory council for CareerPhysician. Comprised of former deans, department chairs, division chiefs and children’s health system executives, the Advisory Council represents more than 100 years of child health leadership experience and is committed to a legacy of positively impacting the breadth and depth of leadership in pediatrics. The Child Health Advisory Council includes nationally recognized thought leaders who are dedicated to providing experiential insight and advisory services to CareerPhysician and our executive search and leadership development clients.

CareerPhysician is a nationally respected physician leadership search and consulting firm with 20 years of unprecedented success in supporting the critical talent needs of academic child health organizations. No one understands the culture and the challenges of academic leadership development better. Our flexible, innovative talent engagement platforms and proven ability to complete complex academic search and leadership development assignments has resulted in an unmatched track record of success. We have created the gold standard in academic leadership development as we work to advance & develop current and future physician leaders.

For more information visit: <http://careerphysician.com/>

