

## **Michael Ayers joins Sanford-Burnham at Lake Nona as Associate Director of Government Relations**

**ORLANDO, Fla., February 27, 2015**—Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute at Lake Nona (Sanford-Burnham) today announced that Michael Ayers has joined the Institute as associate director of Government Relations. In this role, he will develop and execute strategies to fortify Sanford-Burnham's leadership role within Florida's emerging life-sciences industry. Michael's scope of responsibilities includes working with the Florida legislature, U.S. Congress, as well as state and federal government agencies to advance the Institute's mission at its Lake Nona campus. Ayers will report to the vice president of Public Affairs.

"Michael's experience in the health and economic development arenas is particularly relevant to Sanford-Burnham's goal to establish and operate a world-class medical research center in Florida," said Deborah Robison, Sanford-Burnham's vice president of Public Affairs. "I look forward to working with him to spread the word in Tallahassee and D.C. about Sanford-Burnham's role as a catalyst for Florida's biomedical sector growth."

Ayers will help cultivate coalitions throughout the state to strengthen support for medical research that will hasten the movement of discoveries to benefit patients. He will also communicate to legislators how Sanford-Burnham is attracting out-of-state business partnerships and revenue, working with Florida universities to advance their research, and training tomorrow's STEM workforce.

"I'm excited to share the story about Florida's growing life-sciences industry and Sanford-Burnham's contributions with lawmakers and their staff," said Ayers. "Sanford-Burnham researchers are pursuing the discovery of personalized therapeutics that will improve the health of Floridians and people across the globe. Working for a mission-driven organization has always been important to me."

Before joining Sanford-Burnham, Ayers served as the chief of staff at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, where he was responsible for directing the Agency's legislative, communications, and human resources offices. Prior to that, he served as the chief of staff at the Department of Economic Opportunity and the chief of staff and legislative director for the Agency for Workforce Innovation. Earlier in his career, he worked for members of Congress in Washington, D.C. Ayers graduated from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a B.S. degree in Business Administration.

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## **About Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute**

Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute is dedicated to discovering the fundamental molecular causes of disease and devising the innovative therapies of tomorrow. Sanford-Burnham takes a collaborative approach to medical research with major programs in cancer, neurodegeneration and stem cells, diabetes, and infectious, inflammatory, and childhood diseases. The Institute is recognized for its National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center, its NIH-designated Neuroscience Center Cores, and expertise in drug discovery technologies. Sanford-Burnham is a nonprofit, independent institute that employs more than 1,000 scientists and staff in San Diego (La Jolla), Calif., and Orlando (Lake Nona), Fla. For more information, visit us at [sanfordburnham.org](http://sanfordburnham.org).

Sanford-Burnham can also be found on Facebook at [facebook.com/sanfordburnham](https://facebook.com/sanfordburnham) and on Twitter [@sanfordburnham](https://twitter.com/sanfordburnham).

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