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Position and Candidate Specification



Gerontological Society of America

Chief Executive Officer

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About the Society

Founded in 1945, the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary and international organization in the field of aging. GSA's principal mission, shared by its more than 6,000 members, is to foster excellence, innovation, and collaboration to advance aging research, education, practice, and policy. GSA promotes the study of aging by disseminating information and research across a broad range of audiences. Its reach extends to scientists, policymakers, educators, and the public. GSA's vision, "Meaningful Lives as We Age," reflects the organization's expansive approach to advance its mission.

GSA fosters interdisciplinary collaboration among and between, physicians, nurses, biologists, psychologists, social workers, educators, economists, demographers, political scientists, practice leaders, those who study the humanities and the arts, and other scholars across over two dozen disciplines who conduct research, provide healthcare, and serve as educators. GSA members believe the intersection of research from diverse areas is the best way to foster innovation, achieve the greatest impact, advance education, and promote meaningful lives as we share the universal experience of aging.

To further fulfill its mission, GSA assembles over 4,500 professionals from around the world to its Annual Scientific Meeting. This monumental event features more than 500 sessions each year. Additionally, GSA publishes the field's leading peer-reviewed journals. Through networking and mentorship opportunities, GSA provides a professional "home" for gerontologists across their entire career course and students, postdocs, and trainees at all levels.

Societies around the world are experiencing a permanent and transformational shift in the age structure of their populations. GSA members study all facets of aging with a lifecourse perspective. In the United States, by 2035, adults age 65 and older will out-number children under age 18 for the first time in American history. Older Americans — growing in numbers and diversity — will be key to the nation's future economic health, and the public and private sectors must adapt to these demographic realities.

GSA is the leading professional membership society representing researchers, educators, health professionals, and specialists in the field of aging. The Society has three key areas of focus: 1) to promote the conduct of multi- and interdisciplinary research in aging by expanding the quantity of gerontological research; 2) to disseminate gerontological research knowledge to researchers, educators, health professionals, and to policy and opinion makers; and 3) to promote, support, and advocate for education, training, and mentorship in higher education, organizations, and other settings.

Based in Washington, DC, GSA has 28 staff, and a budget of approximately $10M.

For more information, please visit https://www.geron.org/.

GSA enters this leadership transition from a position of considerable strength. Its longstanding reputation, scientific credibility, multidisciplinary community, committed staff, and ability to convene expertise from across the field have established the Society as an important intellectual and professional home for those advancing the study of aging. At the same time, demographic change, shifting research and funding environments, evolving expectations of professional societies, new technologies, and growing public attention to aging and longevity are reshaping both the field and the environment in which GSA operates. The next CEO will have an opportunity to build on a strong foundation while helping the Society determine how it can contribute most meaningfully in this next chapter.

The mandate is one of thoughtful evolution. Working in partnership with the Board, GSA members, partners, volunteers, and staff, the CEO will bring focus to GSA's ambitions, making clear choices about where to invest, where to build, and where greater discipline may be required. They will ensure that the Society's distinctive interdisciplinary character remains at the center of its identity while exploring new ways to serve and connect its community, strengthen its economic model, extend its reach, and bring GSA's expertise to a wider range of audiences and partners. This will require balancing opportunity with organizational capacity and financial realities, and ensuring that new initiatives reinforce rather than diffuse GSA's core strengths.

The CEO will also inherit a deeply committed organization whose people care strongly about GSA, its mission, vision, and organizational values. They will be expected to lead with curiosity, heart, and respect for what has been built, while bringing the clarity, judgment, and organizational discipline required of the Society's chief executive. Internally, that means ensuring alignment around priorities, responsibilities, and decision-making and making sure that ambition is matched by the people and resources needed to execute well. Externally, it means representing GSA with credibility, integrity, and confidence, building relationships across an increasingly broad aging ecosystem, and helping ensure that rigorous evidence and interdisciplinary perspectives inform the conversations shaping the experience of aging.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to	GSA Board of Directors
Direct reports	Chief Operating & Financial Officer Vice President Policy & Professional Affairs Vice President Publishing & Professional Resources Vice President Strategic Alliances & Practice Innovation Director Communications & Social Media
Other key relationships	Aging advocacy community Government agencies, legislators, and NIH Philanthropy Business and industry collaborators and funders Current and prospective volunteers

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- A clear and focused strategic direction that builds on GSA's interdisciplinary strengths and concentrates people and resources on the areas of greatest potential impact.
- A strong and resilient economic model, supported by diversified revenue streams, partnerships, and sustainable sources of non-dues income.
- A compelling and reinforced member value proposition, with deep year-round engagement, strong connection across disciplines and career stages, and particular relevance to students and emerging scholars and professionals.
- Superior reach and influence for GSA and the field, with robust relationships across the aging ecosystem and a visible role in translating evidence to inform policy, practice, and public understanding.
- An aligned and effective organization, with clear priorities, roles, decision-making, accountability, and resource allocation that enable staff to execute the Society's ambitions sustainably.
- Strong relationships among the Board, volunteer leadership, members, and staff, characterized by trust, transparency, appropriate role clarity, and a shared commitment to GSA's future.

GSA's next CEO will be an accomplished enterprise leader who combines strategic perspective with the practical judgment required to lead a complex, multidisciplinary, member- and volunteer-driven organization. They will have an understanding of science and demonstrated experience in successfully leading professional membership organizations. They will understand that GSA's breadth is both one of its greatest strengths and an inherent leadership challenge: its community encompasses different disciplines, professional identities, career stages, and points of view, all connected by an interest in aging but not always by the same priorities. The CEO will have experience supporting mentorship programs for students and early career professionals to build the pipeline of future leaders in the field. The CEO will be an exceptional listener and synthesizer who can build common ground across that diversity, while also having the confidence to establish direction, make choices, and move the organization forward.

The successful candidate will bring the mindset of both a mission-driven leader and an enterprise executive. They will be thoughtful about where GSA can have distinctive impact, disciplined in assessing opportunities against resources and organizational capacity, and comfortable making trade-offs when necessary. They will know how to translate strategy into priorities and execution, cultivate a skilled and effective staff leadership team, and create an environment in which people understand what matters most, how decisions are made, and how their work contributes to the whole. Their approach will be collaborative but not consensus-bound: low in ego, open to challenge and differing perspectives, and willing to exercise judgment and make difficult decisions when required.

Externally, the CEO will be a compelling and credible representative of GSA and the broader field. They will be able to engage scientists and scholars with intellectual substance while communicating the importance of aging research and evidence to educators, policymakers, partners, funders, practitioners, and the public. Experience in the aging field may be advantageous, but it is less important than understanding how science is advanced through professional membership organizations, curiosity about the field, commitment to GSA's mission and vision, and the ability to quickly establish credibility with its community. The next CEO should bring both the ambition to see what GSA can become and the humility to first understand why the organization, its community, and its history matter.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Enterprise and organizational leadership
Significant executive leadership experience in a complex, mission-driven professional membership organization, with accountability for strategy, operations, people, and financial performance.

Business and financial acumen
A record of strengthening an organization's financial position, fostering new business development, setting priorities and making difficult resource trade-offs, and developing or diversifying revenue.

Member and stakeholder engagement
Experience building engagement and value across a diverse membership constituency.

External leadership and partnerships
A credible and effective external representative with experience building relationships across relevant nonprofit,

academic, government, philanthropic, corporate, and/or international communities. Able to expand an organization's reach and partnerships and communicate complex ideas effectively to varied audiences.

Board and governance experience
Experience working effectively with a governing board and volunteers in a shared leadership model, and an understanding of the distinct roles of governance and management.

Aging fluency and mission connection
Ideally, brings knowledge of the scientific enterprise in a relevant area such as aging, gerontology, public health, healthcare, research, education, or a related field. Regardless of background, demonstrates a genuine connection to GSA's mission, respect for research and scholarship across disciplines, and the intellectual curiosity and learning agility to quickly establish credibility in the field.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Acting Strategically

- Sees the enterprise as a whole, identifying the few choices that will matter most to GSA's long-term relevance, impact, and sustainability.
- Evaluates opportunities with intellectual curiosity and business discipline, testing ideas against mission, demand, resources, capacity, risk, and potential impact.
- Brings a forward-looking perspective while understanding what is distinctive and enduring about GSA and should be protected.
- Converts strategy into choices, sequencing, resource allocation, and clear measures of progress.

Leading People

- Sets clear expectations and sustains an environment in which people understand priorities, responsibilities, decision rights, and how their work contributes to shared goals.
- Builds a strong leadership team, trusts expertise throughout the organization, and empowers people to lead within clear areas of accountability.
- Encourages candor and constructive challenge and communicates openly, particularly when priorities or circumstances change.
- Aligns ambition with organizational capacity, making thoughtful choices about what to add, stop, defer, or approach differently.

Collaborating and Influencing

- Listens with genuine curiosity across disciplines and constituencies, recognizing differing interests that are considered in the decisions that are made.
- Synthesizes complex and sometimes competing perspectives, finds areas of common purpose, and builds commitment around a path forward.
- Adapts communication to audiences ranging from scientists and academics to policymakers, funders, partners, members, and the public.

- Effectively applies social media to showcase the organization's activities and the work of its members.
- Establishes relationships across organizational and sector boundaries that expand GSA's perspective, credibility, and ability to advance its mission.

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Intellectual curiosity
- Low ego, self-awareness, and openness to challenge
- Approachable, authentic, and accessible
- Confidence and courage to make difficult choices
- Diplomacy and political astuteness
- Calm, steadiness, optimism, and pragmatism amid complexity and change
- Skilled in public speaking
- Innovative and creative ideas to advance the field of aging [i.e. Scientist Citizen]

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

GSA is being assisted by Spencer Stuart in this important recruitment. If you wish to submit application materials or nominate someone to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer, please email: GSACEO@spencerstuart.com.

The estimated annual base salary range for this position is expected to be within the range of $350,000-425,000; actual compensation will be dependent on the individual's skills, abilities, experience, and qualifications. GSA has an annual merit-based pay increase in recognition of individual performance, accomplishments, and contributions to the organization.

Residing in the DC is area is expected.