



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



### President and CEO Southern Education Foundation Atlanta, GA

---

*“Founded in 1867 as the George Peabody Education Fund, the Southern Education Foundation’s mission is to advance equity and excellence in education for all students in the South, particularly low income students and students of color. SEF uses collaboration, advocacy, and research to improve outcomes from early childhood to adulthood. Our core belief is that education is the vehicle by which all students get fair chances to develop their talents and contribute to the common good.”*

*– SEF mission statement*

---

#### THE OPPORTUNITY



**This is a time of challenge and opportunity for education in America and in the South.** Access to excellence in education – particularly for students of color – is a central issue of our time. For 150 years, the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) has been working to promote equity for underserved Pre-K through Higher Education students throughout the South. While the responsibility to confront the educational

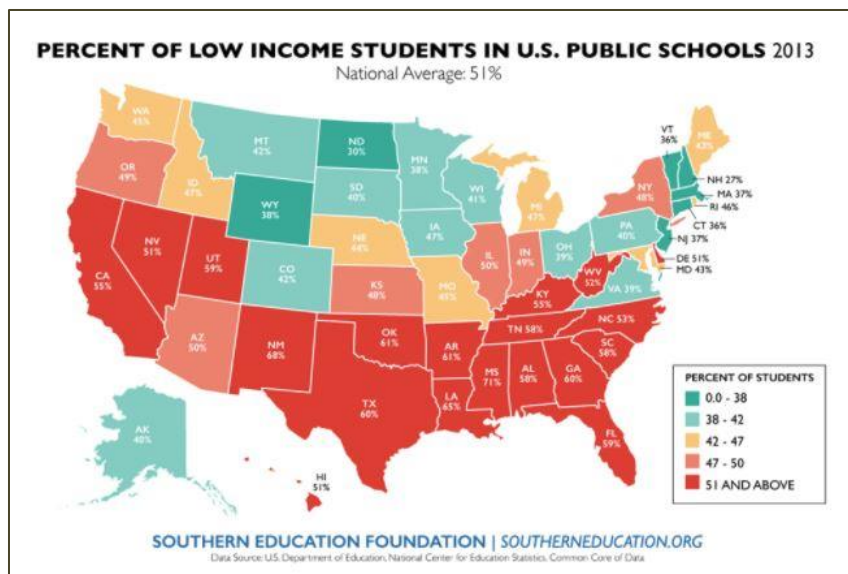
divide for those in the South is immense, so is the opportunity for the organization and its next leader to impact the future of the region. As SEF celebrates its sesquicentennial, the President and CEO will join an organization whose mission and work is as critical now as perhaps anytime in its history.

84 Peachtree Street NW • Fourth Floor • Atlanta, GA 30303 • 404-262-7392

**Finding leaders that matter for missions that matter. ®**

Anchored by a core belief in education as an equalizing force and an unshakable faith in opportunity and access being a key to a bright future, the President and CEO will actively expand SEF's reach as an ambassador for the special role that the organization plays in strengthening and shaping the future of communities throughout the South. S/he will advance a collaborative organizational culture, a long tradition of managing and deploying highly regarded research, a bold new action-oriented mission and a creative balance of leadership and partnership with organizations that share a commitment to advancing access to education.

The President and CEO will maintain a consistent focus on setting a progressive agenda that will attract attention and support from the general public, policy makers, corporations and philanthropy, building external relationships in the region, broadening fundraising efforts in the South and calibrating and operationalizing the organizational strategy necessary for SEF to achieve successful outcomes. Further, s/he will work to establish themselves and the organization as respected and credible leaders in educational policy and research in the region and find and develop key intersections of opportunity and influence where SEF can be a catalyst for policy, advocacy and progress.



To reach its aspirations, SEF seeks an individual who brings well-established relationships in the philanthropy space, credibility among key leaders in the education arena and a passion for SEF and the communities that are the beneficiaries of its mission.

Mandates for the new President and CEO include:

- Enriching the relationships and reputation of SEF throughout the education, advocacy, research and policy landscape – particularly in the South
- Taking a leadership role in tandem with key partners in developing policy, driving advocacy efforts and setting and advancing the education agenda through effective coalition-building throughout the region

- Actively growing resources, strengthening the financial sustainability of the organization and continuing to develop the staff
- Positioning SEF as an engaged leader that drives change in local, regional and national education and equity reform initiatives
- Effectively making the case for investment in education in the South being a national priority that responds to current needs and changing demographics
- Successfully managing the tensions of leading a Southern-focused organization that addresses issues that are of critical relevance to the region while engaging the support of major funders with a focus on national programs and broad impact
- Finding the optimal balance of leading the SEF team and securing external financial support

**The opportunity for the President and CEO is bold and compelling:** to lead SEF into a new era of visibility, engagement, advocacy and relevance across the education and social justice continuum. Through strategy, passion, networks, leverage and advocacy, the President and CEO will ensure that SEF continues to advance the cause of educational access and equity to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes.

## THE ORGANIZATION

The work of the Southern Education Foundation dates back to 1867, when the Peabody Education fund was established by the New York legislature and became the first organized philanthropy in the United States. Through a \$2.4 million gift from George Peabody, the fund was organized to establish a permanent system of public education in the South and increase the number of teachers in the region.

The SEF was formally established in 1937 when four funds - the Peabody Education Fund, The John F. Slater Fund, the Negro Rural School Fund and the Virginia Randolph Fund – collectively assembled resources to support



---

education for those lacking in opportunity, particularly African Americans and the poor. A central asset for many in the region working to advance education, the organization now serves 15 states throughout the South (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia).

Demographics in the South are rapidly changing. 52 percent of children of color in the U.S. are in the South – 27% percent of them Latino, and per the 2016 U.S. Census, southern states represent 37 percent of the total U.S. population. As national strategies around education and access to opportunity continue to advance and evolve, the South will continue to be a critical and central part of both reform and outcomes.

Well known for its programming, policy analysis and outreach, research and scholarship, SEF has long served as a highly credible resource for advocacy organizations and those who work on behalf of increasing access to quality public education. The organization serves students from cradle to career through its three core areas of focus - **promoting early learning opportunities, advancing public education and improving college access and completion.**

The President and CEO will join SEF at a time of promise and inherit an organization with a strong foundation. A strategic plan is near completion that will serve as a well-considered blueprint for the future and help continue to drive SEF's focus towards action and engaged advocacy – beyond SEF's traditional and more limited role as a hub for scholarship and critical research. Recent strides in the growth of the endowment, the depth and experience of the staff and more active and direct engagement in key issues are all examples of SEF's progress towards realizing a compelling vision for the future.

SEF's current level of support from funders throughout the region is limited; progress in building support for SEF among southern funders and growing awareness throughout the region is a key priority. Success in this arena will require the President and CEO to build and manage relationships in ways that will resonate with leaders and communities in the South and compel authentic support and engagement in SEF's mission and initiatives. While being from the South is not a mandate for the next leader, the ability to navigate the relationships, culture and landscape is critically important to SEF's future.

SEF's goals, focus and strategies across the education continuum include:

- **Promoting early learning opportunities.** High-quality early childhood programs may be the single best investment for getting young children –

especially the growing at-risk population – to be school ready and succeed. **SEF’s goal is to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities for children and families throughout the South.** Strategies to accomplish this include providing research, technical assistance and tools, creating opportunities for cross-state collaboration and building community awareness and support.

- **Advancing public education.** Well-funded, safe, supportive and diverse public schools are an essential part of successful public education. **SEF’s goal is to build a constituency for high-quality public schools in the South.** Strategies to achieve this are centered on informing and supporting public education campaigns, regionalizing efforts through policy research and communications efforts and advancing new designs for teaching and learning.

- **Improving college access and completion.** The future of America’s democracy and economic vitality is tied to the percentage of citizens with a college degree. **SEF’s goal is to identify, test and advance policies and practices that increase student success in higher education.** Strategies to drive improved college access and completion include examining and reporting on policies that impact participation, retention and degree completion, testing innovative practices, convening institutional leaders and university trustees to share evidence-based practices and providing technical assistance and capacity-building to enhance program effectiveness.

The organization has a full-time staff of 14, a current annual budget of \$4.5 million and a \$21 million endowment that helps undergird SEF’s impact and secure its future. SEF has enjoyed consistent support from many national foundations including Atlantic Philanthropies, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



Key organizational programs include the [\*Southern Education Leadership Initiative\*](#) (a summer internship that pairs talented undergraduate and graduate students with nonprofits on the front lines of education reform), and the [\*Racial Equity Leadership Network\*](#) (an 18-month fellowship program for executive leaders that addresses historical disparities in education). SEF also played a major role in recent school finance reform efforts in Mississippi as a key partner in the [\*42 for Better Schools\*](#) initiative.

---

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President is charged with comprehensive oversight and accountability for SEF. S/he will be an engaged leader who balances representing SEF in national circles with growing and cultivating relationships and organizational support throughout the South. The President will build on the strong culture of the organization, drive outcomes through active and visible leadership in key regional and national conversations and initiatives, leverage technology, social media and digital tools to make information accessible to a broader audience, grow the capacity of the staff and find the balance for the future that both embraces SEF's traditional roles while continuing to find new ways to achieve impact and relevance.



More specifically, the President and CEO will:

- 1. Effectively and dynamically advocate on behalf of SEF and its mission.** SEF's leader will serve as an ambassador and voice of education in the South throughout key national circles. S/he will be the internal and external face of SEF and its most public champion.
- 2. Build critical donor and funding relationships and cultivate philanthropic relationships in the region that respond to a compelling organizational agenda.** The President and CEO will be uncommonly good at building relationships and inspiring support for SEF. S/he will expand philanthropic relationships both regionally and nationally, and bring a strong network and a proven track record of success in initiating, cultivating and securing significant levels of contributed income.
- 3. Strategically convene key partnerships and build coalitions and strategic alliances to drive progress on issues central to education, equity and the work of SEF.** The President and CEO ensure that SEF is a well-aligned and integral partner to key individuals, organizations and efforts in and around issues central to education and access. S/he will be adept at balancing leadership and participation roles for SEF throughout the region.

- 4. Grow the capacity of the staff.** S/he will be an effective team builder, have a strong commitment to growing the capacity of SEF and be invested in the mandate of developing a talented and motivated staff.
  
- 5. Work with the board, staff, community and mission partners to lead and advance the needs of education, advocacy and policy partners and position SEF to achieve important and measurable programmatic outcomes.** The President and CEO will help ensure that SEF is at the nexus of key regional and national initiatives. The next leader will ensure that SEF is well-positioned to translate and disseminate seminal research as well as the tools, technical assistance and perspectives to help partners and policymakers set the education agenda and advance critical initiatives and policy through traditional and emerging communication mediums.
  
- 6. Lead the SEF staff and board with passion and purpose.** The President and CEO will have high aspirations and be a strategic and visionary individual who is credible, collaborative and committed to the organization and its people.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

<b>Reports to</b>	SEF Board of Trustees
<b>Direct Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer</li> <li>• Vice President of Programs</li> <li>• Director, Strategic Initiatives, Office of the President</li> </ul>
<b>Has other key relationships including:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key leaders throughout the field of education</li> <li>• Donors and supporters of SEF</li> <li>• National foundation leadership</li> <li>• Advocacy organizations, policy leaders and partners in the equity and access arena</li> <li>• Community leaders throughout the South</li> <li>• Civic leadership and government officials integral to SEF’s mission and mandates</li> </ul>

## THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate is an experienced leader who is energized by and embraces the role of externally representing the organization. Superlative leadership, interpersonal, fundraising and organization priority setting skills are essential. Deep credibility in the educational space and knowledge of the philanthropy landscape are critical assets being sought in the next President and CEO.

---

This individual will bring a collaborative spirit, energy and enthusiasm, high emotional intelligence, listening and communication skills and quiet confidence to SEF.

Attributes being sought in the new President include:

- A high level of cultural acuity and the ability to engage with local and regional communities throughout the South with grace and ease
- A strong level of content expertise across the educational continuum
- A deep network of contacts and relationship within the foundation, philanthropy and education space
- Strong fundraising acumen and a proven track record of cultivating support
- Well-demonstrated experience in advocating for educational priorities and success in building and playing key roles in coalitions and strategic partnerships
- Experience in fostering a strong organizational culture
- Passion for the mission of education and advancing equity and opportunities for the underserved
- The ability to develop talent and oversee the professional growth of staff
- Being an open person that inspires trust, invites collaboration and engenders an environment of teamwork



## THE LOCATION

SEF is based in Atlanta, Georgia, the nation's ninth largest metropolitan area and long the economic capital of the Southeast. Atlanta is home to over six million residents, the world's busiest airport, six major institutions of higher learning, fifteen *Fortune 500* companies and some of the world's most visible nonprofit organizations.

---

**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email [SEF@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:SEF@BoardWalkConsulting.com) or call John Sparrow, Crystal Stephens or Patti Kish at 404-262-7392.**

---