



BrightFocus[®] Foundation

Cure in Mind. Cure in Sight.

President and Chief Executive Officer
BrightFocus Foundation
Clarksburg, Maryland

THE SEARCH

BrightFocus Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization internationally renowned for funding scientific research to defeat Alzheimer's disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma, seeks a collaborative, forward-looking, and strategic leader to serve as its next President and Chief Executive Officer. Guided by the idea of a world where all people can age free from diseases of mind and sight along with a mission to fund exceptional scientific research while advancing public understanding, BrightFocus is entering a period of exciting growth and opportunity.

With more than 50 years dedicated to scientific research, BrightFocus has awarded more than \$300 million in funding across nearly 2,100 projects worldwide and currently supports nearly 200 active research awards in 16 countries. The Foundation's work has attracted global scientific leadership, including Nobel laureates among its awardees and board members, and continues to play a catalytic role in advancing early-stage, high-impact research.

Headquartered in Clarksburg, Maryland, in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, BrightFocus operates through three flagship global programs—Alzheimer's Disease Research, Macular Degeneration Research, and National Glaucoma Research. The Foundation is supported by a staff of approximately 50 professionals and operates with a collaborative, mission-driven culture. With annual revenues of approximately \$70 million, BrightFocus enjoys a strong financial position supported entirely by private contributions with a national base of more than 600,000 donors. An extraordinary strategic asset for BrightFocus is the Scientific Review Committee (SRCs), a network of approximately 100 leading scientists and clinicians from around the world who volunteer their expertise in support of the organization's mission. Through the evaluation of hundreds of research proposals each year, the SRCs provide the rigorous scientific review that guides BrightFocus' research investments and ensures exceptional stewardship of donor resources.

BrightFocus is distinguished not only by the impact of its research funding, but also by its deeply donor-centric approach to fundraising and engagement. The Foundation has developed a high-touch, “white-glove” model of stewardship that combines large-scale direct response fundraising with personalized engagement. This fundraising strategy reflects a blended approach, with direct mail serving as a longstanding core channel alongside a growing suite of digital and online pathways, including email, social media, and emerging platforms, which enable the organization to meet donors where they are while maintaining a strong emphasis on responsiveness and individual connection.

Reporting to the Board of Directors and working closely with senior leadership, the next President and CEO will work to advance the Foundation’s mission, steward its resources, and guide its strategic direction. They will have the opportunity to build on a strong foundation, ensuring continued financial sustainability, expanding the organization’s reach and influence, and advancing its strategic priorities to diversify funding and audiences, deepen partnerships, and accelerate pathways to research breakthroughs.

BrightFocus Foundation has retained the national executive search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to assist in this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT BRIGHTFOCUS FOUNDATION

BrightFocus Foundation, through its flagship programs of [Alzheimer's Disease Research](#), [Macular Degeneration Research](#), and [National Glaucoma Research](#), is on a mission to stop Alzheimer's and vision loss in its tracks. Founded in 1973, the organization funds critical research that could result in life-changing medical breakthroughs. It has awarded more than \$300 million in global research funding over the past 50 years, catalyzing thousands of life-enhancing scientific breakthroughs. Today, BrightFocus is an internationally recognized leader in the science community that has funded nearly 7,000 researchers in 28 countries to develop transformative early research supporting leading-edge advances, including the first artificial heart, gold-standard macular degeneration treatment methods, and breakthrough Alzheimer’s disease testing. The foundation is currently led by a dedicated president and chief executive officer who is supported by a senior leadership team of four, a staff of 50, and a 15-member (including the CEO) board of directors.

BrightFocus’ headquarters, located in a 33,000 square foot building on nearly five acres of land in Clarksburg, Maryland, is about 30 miles north of Washington, DC. As momentum builds and its reputation for funding excellence continues to grow, the foundation is presented with new and exciting opportunities to further its mission. The BrightFocus leadership team and board of directors are talented and deeply committed to their long-term impact. Longevity in staff retention is a notable asset; many staff members have been a part of the organization for decades.

Alzheimer's disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma affect more than 335 million people worldwide, including one in seven Americans over age 40 in the United States. BrightFocus is committed to advancing

bold, innovative research that drives new discoveries, diagnostic tools, and treatments that benefit all populations.

Scientific Review Committee

BrightFocus' Scientific Review Committees (SRCs) provide the rigorous scientific assessment that guides BrightFocus' research investments and ensures exceptional stewardship of donor resources. The SRCs evaluate hundreds of research proposals annually. The caliber, scale, and dedication of this scientific community distinguish BrightFocus from many of its peers and underscore its standing within the global research community.

Information Services

BrightFocus serves as a trusted resource for individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. The Foundation shares the latest scientific advances and provides free, expert-informed bilingual educational resources that increase awareness and understanding of eye and brain diseases and their impact. Information services connect patients and caregivers to expert-reviewed health resources, virtual support groups, and the latest scientific breakthroughs.

Fundraising and Financial Overview

Recently surpassing its 50th anniversary, BrightFocus demonstrates strong financial health supported by a durable fundraising model and significant assets. At the end of fiscal year 2025, the organization reports total assets of approximately \$65 million, reflecting a stable and well-managed financial position.

BrightFocus relies on multiple fundraising streams in support of its three programs. The organization operates a sophisticated, in-house direct response fundraising model, anchored in direct mail and increasingly supported by digital engagement that generates contributions from a broad national donor base of more than 600,000 individuals. A core group of long-standing supporters includes tens of thousands of households with sustained giving over many years, underscoring the organization's emphasis on donor retention and stewardship.

BrightFocus engages donors through a range of additional channels, including corporate and foundation partnerships, monthly and planned giving, workplace giving, charitable rollovers, and tribute gifts. In fiscal year 2025, the organization reported \$73 million in total support and revenue, including more than \$43 million in contributions and grants, reflecting the strength and diversity of its fundraising model.

Governance

BrightFocus Foundation is governed by a [board of directors](#) composed of 15 members, all with a broad range of experience and expertise across healthcare, finance, and nonprofit management. The board meets quarterly to ensure that donor contributions fund the highest quality research, and its members help BrightFocus achieve its public outreach objectives. [Patricia McGlothlin Stewart](#) currently serves as

chair of the board of directors. Patricia has worked in various capacities for JPMorgan for over three decades and has extensive knowledge and experience in advising high-net-worth individuals, trusts, not-for-profits, and corporations.

More information about BrightFocus Foundation can be found at <https://www.brightfocus.org/>.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The President and Chief Executive Officer provide strategic and organizational leadership for BrightFocus as the foundation enters a new chapter marked by growth and amplified impact. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President and CEO will work closely with their executive leadership team, consisting of the SVP of Development, SVP of Strategic Partnerships, SVP of Finance and Administration, and VP of Scientific Affairs.

The President and CEO will be creative, nimble, and bold as they advance BrightFocus' mission, positioning the foundation to navigate and seize opportunities presented by external pressures and shifts across the scientific research funding landscape. Additionally, the President and CEO will be a savvy and forward-thinking fundraiser, able to drive sophisticated, data-driven strategies to engage donors across multiple platforms while maintaining a genuinely donor-centered approach. As an innovator looking to make a transformative impact, the President and CEO will demonstrate a thoughtful and strategic approach to risk-taking, grounding decisions related to fundraising strategies, financial models, revenue diversification, and organizational planning in data, market insights, and a clear understanding of risk tolerance.

The President and CEO will be a key external representative of the Foundation, serving as a thought leader, spokesperson, and ambassador to elevate brand identity, extend reach, and cultivate partnerships across scientific, philanthropic, corporate, and public sectors. Finally, and no less importantly, the President and CEO will lead and inspire an incredibly dedicated team of approximately 50 staff, preserving a distinctive and prized culture of collaboration, empowerment, and care. The successful candidate will be a seasoned and strategic leader, relationship builder, and highly engaged manager with demonstrated fundraising acumen, financial fluency, exquisite communication skills, and the interpersonal acuity to guide BrightFocus confidently into this next moment of possibility.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Strategic Leadership and Vision in a Time of Growth

The next President and CEO will assume leadership at a pivotal moment following the transition of a long-tenured and transformational predecessor who shepherded the foundation through years of successful growth. BrightFocus is well-positioned, well-respected, and has a clear mission, yet a rapidly shifting funding environment and emergent technological advancements require strategic, future-oriented, and nimble leadership. The next President and CEO will execute strategies that build on existing strengths

while thoughtfully embracing new tools, partnerships, and engagements. The incoming President and CEO will specifically be responsible for advancing key strategic priorities, namely: growing revenue to support increased research funding; diversifying audiences and stakeholders; expanding organizational reach and visibility, especially across digital channels; developing external partnerships and external engagements; and ensuring ongoing operational improvements and excellence. It will be critical that the incoming President and CEO bring strong judgment, creative thinking, and the ability to align financial, programmatic, and operational goals with long-term vision.

Fiscal Stewardship & Long-Term Financial Sustainability

BrightFocus is financially strong, and the incoming President and CEO will be essential to sustaining the Foundation's long-term financial outlook. Working closely with the Board and the SVP, Finance and Administration, the President and CEO will provide leadership over BrightFocus' financial strategy and budget, aiming to grow revenue and pursue continuous operational improvements. The President and CEO should possess the financial acumen and operational management experience that enables them to quickly grasp the processes and systems that underpin the foundation.

Fundraising Strategy & Donor Diversification

The President and CEO will inherit a highly effective fundraising operation anchored in direct response fundraising. BrightFocus' direct response approach is well-honed, time-tested, and most importantly donor-centered, consistently yielding a broad and loyal donor base. The incoming President and CEO must recognize the incredible value and significance of this fundraising model as well as the staff who drive these efforts. Simultaneously, the President and CEO will strategically guide efforts to evolve and diversify fundraising to ensure long-term financial sustainability in the face of demographic shifts, external financial pressures, and technological advancements. In recent years, BrightFocus has made great strides in expanding major, planned, institutional, and corporate giving while also building out digital fundraising modalities and a growing social media presence. The new President and CEO will continue to drive these innovations. They will bring a nuanced understanding of today's fundraising landscape required to take informed risks and invest in emerging opportunities. Across all they do, the President and CEO will ensure that the Foundation maintains its genuinely personal, white-glove approach to donor engagement as fundraising modalities and techniques evolve.

Team Leadership and Cultivation of a Cherished Organizational Culture

One of BrightFocus Foundation's defining features is its deeply rooted organizational culture marked by high levels of engagement, empowerment, trust, collaboration, innovation, and dedication. Through this moment of transition, the President and CEO will be expected to uphold this treasured culture while also evolving it for the Foundation's next chapter. It will be important for the President and CEO to appreciate BrightFocus' people-centered, relational ethos by spending time getting to know staff across all levels and areas of the organization, learning about the work they do, and recognizing the value they bring. A key element of BrightFocus' special culture is an orientation towards constant improvement, learning, and

experimentation. To that end, the new President and CEO will be committed to professional development, succession planning, cross-functional training, and advancement opportunities. The successful candidate will be an accessible, humble, and emotionally intelligent leader who inspires confidence, models transparency and accountability, and creates an environment where all staff feel seen, valued, supported, and connected to the mission.

Cultivate and Steward Relationships Across the Scientific Community

Over the last decade, BrightFocus has established a trusted and well-respected reputation across the scientific community. As the state of public research funding remains uncertain, BrightFocus' role as a funder, convener, and educator is more critical than ever before. The new President and CEO will serve as a true partner to the scientific community, ensuring the Foundation provides the catalytic funding, leadership, and community engagement scientists need in this moment and into the future. They will engage meaningfully with researchers, building connections among scientists, institutions, and funding partners, helping to advance collaborations and accelerate discovery. While the President and CEO is not required or expected to be a scientist, they must possess intellectual curiosity, respect the scientific process, and have the credibility and confidence to engage thoughtfully with experts in the field. The ability to listen, ask insightful questions, and translate between scientific priorities, programmatic opportunities, and strategic direction will be essential.

External Engagement and Brand Visibility

Despite the Foundation's significant reach and impact, its flagship programs—Alzheimer's Disease Research, Macular Degeneration Research, and National Glaucoma Research—have stronger recognition than the BrightFocus name itself. There is a great opportunity to elevate BrightFocus' visibility at the institutional level, and in doing so expand its influence and mission. The President and CEO will serve as BrightFocus' key external representative, providing a clear and recognizable organizational voice, strengthening brand cohesion and visibility, and increasing presence across media, digital platforms, conferences, and other thought-leadership spaces. As its primary spokesperson, the President and CEO will represent the Foundation with credibility and clarity, translating complex scientific concepts into compelling stories for diverse stakeholders. The President and CEO will be an authentic communicator with strong instincts for messaging, brand positioning, and audience development. Familiarity engaging across social media platforms and being comfortable as a visible public figure would also be beneficial.

Partner with BrightFocus' Board of Directors and Continue to Cultivate Next-Generation Leadership

BrightFocus' Board is composed of thoughtful, engaged members who care deeply about the Foundation's mission and take their governance responsibilities seriously. The President and CEO will build a close relationship with the Board Chair while serving as a transparent, communicative partner to the full Board. The successful candidate will bring a track record of board engagement and development and will look for opportunities to clarify expectations, strengthen governance, and offer training that helps trustees better understand the Foundation's operations, finances, and strategies. Given Board term limits, the CEO

will help to shape the Board's future composition by recruiting members whose expertise and perspectives complement those of current trustees.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The next President & CEO will be a mission-driven leader who brings a combination of strategic leadership, fundraising acumen, and the ability to cultivate strong relationships with donors and across scientific communities. While one candidate will not embody all attributes, the successful candidate will bring many of the following:

- **Extensive Development Leadership Experience:** At least 10 years in nonprofit fundraising, including a demonstrated record of securing major gifts (six- to eight-figure) and leading comprehensive development programs across annual, major, and planned giving.
- **Strategic Leader:** Proven ability to set and execute fundraising strategy, lead strategic planning efforts, and translate goals into measurable results.
- **Team Builder & Organizational Leader:** Experience building, managing, and developing high-performing teams, with a track record of fostering a collaborative, accountable, and high-trust culture.
- **Relationship-Driven Fundraiser:** Demonstrates success cultivating and stewarding relationships with diverse stakeholders, including major donors, corporate and foundation partners, board members, and external constituents.
- **Compelling Communicator & Ambassador:** Skilled spokesperson with the ability to clearly and persuasively articulate mission, impact, and complex initiatives to varied audiences.
- **Sector Knowledge & External Awareness:** Brings familiarity with trends in philanthropy, healthcare, and biomedical research, with the ability to engage credibly with scientists, physicians, and research communities.
- **Collaborative & Emotionally Intelligent:** Operates with strong interpersonal skills, humility, and empathy; builds partnerships internally and externally and effectively incorporates feedback.
- **Analytical & Operationally Strong:** Demonstrates strong organizational, analytical, and problem-solving skills, including experience leveraging donor data, analytics, and systems to inform strategy and evaluate risk.
- **Hands-On & Adaptable Leader:** Exhibits a strong work ethic and willingness to engage operationally, paired with creativity, sound judgment, and flexibility in evolving environments.
- **Mission-Driven:** Deep commitment to BrightFocus' mission, with a passion for advancing research.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The total annual compensation for this full-time position will be between \$400,000 - \$450,000 depending on the candidate's qualifications and experience.

BrightFocus Foundation provides the following leave benefits to full-time employees: vacation, sick, personal, holiday, bereavement, jury duty, military leave.

BrightFocus Foundation provides the following insurance benefits to full-time employees:

- Employer Contributed Medical, which includes Dental and HSA
- Employer Paid Vision
- Employer Paid Life, includes Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D)
- Employer Paid Disability, Short-Term & Long-Term
- Employer Paid Long Term Care

BrightFocus Foundation provides the following retirement benefits to full-time employees:

- Employee Contributed 403(b)
- Employer Contributed Money Purchase Plan Pension

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/brightfocus-foundation/president-chief-executive-officer>.

Karen Avery, Partner

Dan Rodas, Partner

Amble Ryan, Managing Associate

Steph Simon, Senior Associate

Caroline Corry, Senior Search Coordinator

[Isaacson, Miller](#)

BrightFocus is committed to the full utilization of all human resources and to a policy of equal opportunity. In accordance with applicable laws, it is our policy to recruit, hire, train and promote individuals, as well as administer any and all personnel actions, without regard to any legally-protected characteristic including, but not limited to, race, age, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by BrightFocus Foundation. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by BrightFocus Foundation would supersede any conflicting information in this document.