



Search for the Executive Director
Center for Coastal Studies
Provincetown, Massachusetts

THE OPPORTUNITY

A nonprofit, independent research organization dedicated to advancing applied research, education, and public policy initiatives for the betterment of coastal ecosystems, the [Center for Coastal Studies](#) (CCS or the Center) seeks an executive director to lead the Center into its next era of impact. Drawn to the Center's ethos of doing science that matters, the next executive director will bring a deep passion for the CCS's commitment to scientific rigor.

The Center for Coastal Studies provides sound science to formulate solutions that address the ocean's most pressing challenges. Rooted in investigation, CCS's work delivers cutting-edge discoveries about marine and coastal ecosystems and the life inhabiting them. Its impact extends far beyond research, motivating and equipping communities to engage in protecting coastal and ocean resources. CCS's work focuses on the waters of Cape Cod, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and the broader Gulf of Maine, the latter of which is known to be the most rapidly warming body of water on the planet, but extends globally – partnering with researchers across six continents. With nearly 50 years of experience, CCS is uniquely positioned to address the urgency of our degraded oceans and the demands of the current climate crisis.

Today, CCS has a [wide-ranging and active portfolio of impactful science](#), from critically endangered North Atlantic right whales to shark and seal research to collaborations with marine fisheries. As just a sampling of impact outcomes, the Center has disentangled more than 250 whales and trained more than 40 countries in its disentanglement methods; removed and recycled 160,000 pounds of debris from the ocean floor; helped local towns analyze more than 8,000 water samples annually to help improve water quality; and supported 23 Cape and Islands towns with access to CCS's user-friendly app to predict the extent of impacts from approaching, and future, storm-related flooding events. CCS's next executive director will reinforce the strength and quality of the organization's portfolio and ensure infrastructure is effective in its scale and scope to support mission-critical work.

The next leader will galvanize CCS's high-performing team, board, community members, political leaders, funders, and other external partners, bringing diverse groups together for a shared purpose: forging

strategic partnerships to motivate communities and stakeholders to engage in protecting coastal and ocean resources. This moment calls for a collaborative, people-first leader with outstanding abilities in relationship development and communication who will convey the impact of the Center’s research to critical audiences.

The Center for Coastal Studies has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to support the search for its next executive director. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR COASTAL STUDIES

Established in 1976, the Center for Coastal Studies is a nonprofit institution dedicated to understanding, preserving, and protecting marine ecosystems and the coastal environment through [applied scientific research](#), [innovative education programs](#), and public policy initiatives, with a particular focus on the dynamic regions off Cape Cod and the Gulf of Maine. CCS has pioneered progressive techniques for rescuing free-swimming whales and sea turtles from life-threatening [entanglements](#) in fishing gear. Each successful rescue not only saves an animal’s life, but also contributes valuable data, advancing the organization’s understanding and mitigation of the entanglement problem.

Renowned for impactful research on large whales in the North Atlantic and beyond, CCS conducts extensive, long-term studies on the [North Atlantic right whale](#), ensuring the preservation of this critically endangered species and its vital habitats off Cape Cod. Since the 1970s, CCS scientists have played a pivotal role in advancing knowledge of [humpback whale](#) biology, ecology, status, and threats.

Beyond whales, CCS focuses on broader marine ecosystems, undertaking research on [seals](#) and [sharks](#) to inform constructive approaches to human-wildlife conflicts. Its scientists also delve into [geological processes](#) along and near the coast, enhancing the Center’s understanding of Cape Cod’s natural shoreline and protecting it from the impacts of development.

From [marine water quality monitoring](#) in Cape Cod Bay to [collaborating with fishermen](#) for sustainable fisheries and [reducing marine debris](#), CCS is unwavering in its dedication to advancing science, supporting science-based resource management, engaging citizens, and fostering educational initiatives for all age groups. Collaboration is at the heart of the organization’s mission, as the Center works seamlessly with other institutions to propel its overarching commitment to the health and preservation of coastal ecosystems.

History and Mission

The Center for Coastal Studies was founded by three visionary researchers—Dr. Graham Giese, Dr. Charles “Stormy” Mayo, and Dr. Barbara Shuler Mayo—whose shared passion, scientific expertise, and tireless dedication laid the foundation for what has evolved into an internationally acclaimed organization.

Today, CCS has grown from a team of three in a modest storage room in the attic of the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce to a team of 53 staff members collaborating with 60 adjunct and citizen scientists, interns, apprentices, and volunteers in a cutting-edge, 12,000 square-foot state-certified laboratory.

What started as a modest educational initiative with three people on a field walk armed with clipboards and binoculars has blossomed into a robust education program that reaches more than 20,000 individuals annually. Early attempts at whale rescue methods have transformed into leading an international network of experts in disentanglement. The Center's concerns about pollution in Boston Harbor migrating to Cape Cod Bay have positioned it as the leading institution for testing, monitoring, and safeguarding the waters surrounding Cape Cod. Since its founding, CCS has been dedicated to investigating carefully and credibly the facts to inform critical public policy decision making. CCS has published 270 peer-reviewed publications, and its researchers are cited at significant rates by the scientific community.

Leadership and Governance

The Center for Coastal Studies is governed by a 23-member board of directors, which includes a nine-member Executive Committee. The board meets four times a year. Standing committees include Administration and Finance, Governance, Development, and Nominations.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the executive director is responsible for assessing, developing, and communicating CCS's organizational values and goals to strengthen the Center's position as a premier coastal ecosystem research institution and a source of knowledge about the effects of humans on coastal ecosystems. CCS seeks a visionary leader to empower a talented staff, manage and grow a multi-faceted organization, and expand and deepen their external partnerships. As the leading external voice of the organization, the executive director will develop and present a compelling vision of CCS to individual, corporate, governmental, public, and private constituencies.

The executive director provides leadership for an organization of 53 full-time staff and 60 adjunct scientists, apprentices, interns, and volunteers, working with and supervising the leadership team. The organization has an FY24 budget of \$7.8 million, approximately \$5.2 million of which is from grants and contracts for programs, another \$2.4 million from philanthropic contributions, and the remaining \$200,000 from other sources, including merchandise sales, tool sales, and interest income. In recent years, individual donor revenue has doubled to an average of \$1.5 million per year, with at least two-thirds of donors repeating their support annually.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The executive director will be charged with addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Maintain and enhance the Center’s reputation as a leader in advancing collaborative, interdisciplinary science that is focused on finding sustainable solutions to address the ocean’s most pressing challenges.

CCS has an excellent reputation for its scientific research expertise and is well-known for its endeavors to provide credible science-based information to decision-makers to inform the development of sustainable solutions to coastal and ocean issues. Committed to doing “science that matters,” CCS is uniquely positioned to address the urgency of our degraded oceans and the challenges posed by climate change, paving the way for informed solutions to safeguard our oceans and marine ecosystems.

The executive director will coalesce and galvanize staff, board members, partner organizations, community members, and others in support of the Center’s mission, reinforcing the CCS esprit de corps. This leader will guide the organization in strategic planning, balancing its ability to be nimble and dynamic while ensuring the Center is guided by clear direction, decision-making, and communication, which will be paramount as CCS considers opportunities to amplify its impact.

Continue to grow financial resources to support the CCS mission.

The new executive director will have the responsibility to identify and reach new sources of funding and other resources. CCS is planning a major 50th-anniversary endowment campaign, and this leader will serve as the lead fundraiser, identifying, cultivating, and securing new major donors and attracting other sources of philanthropic support. At the same time, they will strengthen relationships with existing donors to encourage continued support of CCS and its work. The executive director will continue the Center’s recent fundraising momentum, growth, and improvements in financial sustainability.

In close partnership with the director of development and board, they will lead efforts to raise between \$20 and \$30 million over the next five years and achieve the following strategic goals: doubling the organization’s unrestricted, private philanthropic revenue, growing contributions from individuals, building an endowment of \$10 to 15 million, and expanding co-financed academic and/or corporate partnerships. A champion of the work of CCS scientists, the successful leader will be the primary spokesperson, able to inspire others and discuss the impact of the Center’s research with a wide variety of individual, foundation, corporate, and government audiences. They will seize opportunities to align the Center’s strengths and advantages with national research initiatives, bringing funding opportunities to the attention of scientists.

Cultivate mutually beneficial external partnerships.

The successful leader will build upon the Center’s existing relationships with critical constituencies, including state and federal agencies, elected officials, community partners, funders, and other environmental research-based nonprofits. The Center’s credible, science-backed information has been a valuable asset to policymakers working to achieve more environmentally sustainable management of

coastal resources. The executive director will continue to cultivate these relationships and seek opportunities to be more proactive with outreach and educational efforts to key audiences.

Engage and work closely with the Center's committed and talented Board.

The executive director works closely with the board to ensure the success of CCS; they will engage effectively with the board and present concise, thorough information to support sound and strategic governance decisions. As the fulcrum between the board and the organization, they are essential to strengthening lines of open and productive communication. They will draw on members' knowledge and diverse experiences in furthering a coordinated mission for CCS.

Attract, retain, and develop skilled staff.

The next executive director of CCS will inherit a talented, thoughtful team of professionals with a devout commitment to the organization's mission and unparalleled dedication to scientific excellence. Scientific excellence, mutual respect, a collaborative approach, and an efficient and effective administrative infrastructure are essential elements of the organization's culture of success.

This leader will leverage the expertise and strengths of staff, empowering and supporting them to do their best work both independently and collaboratively. The strength of CCS's work and organizational culture has retained many team members with the organization for decades, who bring deep institutional knowledge. Bringing a collaborative leadership style, the new executive director should draw on that wealth of knowledge. This new leader should have the skills and appetite to support and evaluate the Center's internal infrastructure, identify opportunities to refine processes and systems, support internal growth opportunities, and strategize the recruitment and retention of top talent while continuing to cultivate community. One key challenge they will work on is identifying creative solutions to the impact of the rising costs of housing in the Provincetown market on staff retention for the Center.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The executive director need not be a scientist but must firmly believe in CCS's mission to protect coastal and ocean resources by serving as a source of unimpeachable scientific expertise. While no person will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications:

- Demonstrated experience guiding, supporting, and leveraging staff expertise and capacity; commitment to recruiting and developing high-performing teams
- Exceptional organizational skills and experience with financial oversight and fundraising, including budgeting, planning, and reporting
- Successful track record developing strong institutional partnerships and engaging in conversations about complex topics that require diplomacy and political savviness

- Effective interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to establish strong, purposeful relationships with diverse communities, and the capacity to work closely with and earn the respect and trust of stakeholders both internally and externally
- Experience working with a governing board or equivalent
- Ability to represent and communicate highly technical work to a range of audiences
- Comfortable delegating and empowering team members to take ownership of their roles
- Quick decision-making abilities under changing conditions
- An open and honest communication style, emotional intelligence, and an approach to leadership that is collaborative, conscientious, and adaptable
- Experience as a role model for respectful interpersonal engagement across diverse perspectives

LOCATION

Provincetown

Situated at the northernmost tip of Cape Cod, Provincetown, Massachusetts has long been considered one of the best coastal towns in America. It's known for its beautiful beaches, an eclectic mix of galleries and museums, numerous dining entertainment options, and charming shops. Provincetown has 400 years of history welcoming people. The town has long been celebrated as a welcoming and inclusive haven for the LGBTQ+ community, hosting various events and festivals throughout the year.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (including resumes and two- to three-page letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent in confidence to: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/center-coastal-studies/executive-director>

Kennedy Kearney-Fischer, Managing Associate
Karen Wilcox, Partner of Counsel
Annah Wells, Associate
Nathaniel Rodriguez Sosa, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

CCS is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, dis/ability, age, or veteran status.