



# **Chief Diversity Officer Position Description**



**Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc.**  
**Executive Search, Consulting and Training**

## **The Position**

The State Universities Retirement System (SURS) invites nominations, expressions of intent and applications for an exceptional leader to serve as the founding Chief Diversity Officer (CDO).

Under the direction of the Executive Director the CDO will support the organization through the development, implementation and coordination of efforts to foster an inclusive environment. The CDO will help develop and support a strategy that will lead to a comprehensive and actionable company-wide diversity strategy that builds upon the organization's ability to attract, respect, support and celebrate diversity in all forms. Specifically, but not limited to, the CDO will be tasked with developing a diversity subcontracting policy to ensure the engagement of minority owned money managers as well as other contractors by SURS. This policy will include a system for tracking the results to ensure success and adherence to the policy.

## **Education & Qualifications**

The ideal candidate will possess a bachelor's degree with preference given to those candidates who possess an advanced degree, diversity training/certification and demonstrate progressive administrative responsibilities. The candidate will possess a track record of success coordinating and/or leading a broad range of diversity initiatives to include experience developing support programs and coordinating and facilitating workshops; experience with contracting and subcontracting with historically underrepresented groups, financial services, and engagement with underrepresented money managers and vendors; the ability to think strategically; and an understanding of how to engage and build productive relationships.

Additionally, the successful candidate will have the following personal qualifications and characteristics: the highest professional and personal integrity; a genuine appreciation for fostering diversity, equity and inclusion; the ability to work independently and cooperatively with various levels of administrators and staff; superior verbal and written communication skills; excellent judgment and organization skills; demonstrated experience as a collaborator who inspires confidence and trust; and, experience working with historically underrepresented group contracting, subcontracting, financial services and underrepresented money managers.

## **Essential Duties and Responsibilities**

Reporting directly to the Executive Director, the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) serves as the subject matter expert for diversity and inclusion initiatives. Key responsibilities include the following:

- Serves as the chief liaison for SURS on all matters related to diversity and inclusion.
- Works closely with the SURS administrative leaders, and staff to promote an inclusive environment that is welcoming and fosters a sense of belonging among employees.
- In support of the Head of Legislative Affairs, represents SURS with elected officials and provides testimony on legislation.
- Assists the investment team as a resource to identify diverse managers.

- Conducts ongoing analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to identify trends, patterns and short and long-term impacts of diversity and inclusion recommendations and implementation strategies, including outreach and engagement with minority-owned and women-owned businesses.
- Provides overall direction and guidance, planning, policy input, strategic communication and technical and internal support for SURS around diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.
- Develops and implements communications, programming and training strategies to support the diversity, equity and inclusion message.
- Develops and sustains diversity, equity and inclusion programming within the SURS organization.
- Assists with refining and monitoring diversity and inclusion goals.
- Identifying strategies to attract underserved candidates, including the planning and orchestrating of opportunities to highlight diversity and inclusion through events such as heritage/cultural months, marketing and communications, participation in job fairs and other opportunities.
- Works with Human Resources to ensure that diversity training is embedded in all training programs for employees.
- Travels, primarily across the State of Illinois, to promote and support the message of inclusivity in the outreach efforts of SURS and/or to participate in national, regional and state professional opportunities.
- Works collaboratively with leadership to align recruitment and retention of diverse professional staff and educate employees to improve the membership experience according to core values of diversity, inclusion and community engagement.
- Serves as a consultant for division and unit leadership in developing specific goals for diversity and inclusion.
- Works with investment managers and procurement to develop a pipeline for the recruitment of underrepresented managers and vendors.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

## **About The State Universities Retirement System (SURS)**

SURS is the administrator of a cost-sharing, multiple employer, public employee retirement system that provides retirement, survivor, disability and death benefits to employees of Illinois state universities, community colleges, and certain other affiliated organizations and agencies. SURS was created in 1941, by an act of the Illinois General Assembly, and is governed by the Illinois Pension Code (40 ILCS 5/15-101 et seq.). In 1963, the System adopted its current name, State Universities Retirement System (SURS) and in the following years, the System grew to include other universities, colleges and affiliated agencies throughout the state.

SURS currently provides benefit services to over 230,000 members throughout the world who work for 61 employers. SURS is responsible for investing assets of more than \$19 billion in a diversified portfolio of U.S. and foreign stocks, bonds, real estate and alternative investments. SURS also administers a defined contribution plan, the Self-Managed Plan, which currently has assets of approximately \$2.2 billion. Northern Trust serves as SURS' master trustee custodian.

An elected and appointed, eleven-person, board of trustees, governs SURS. The chairperson of the board of trustees is, by statute, the chairperson of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Five members of the board are appointed by the governor of the state of Illinois. The remaining six members of the board are elected by participating members (four individuals) and annuitants (two individuals). Trustees serve six-year terms. <https://www.surs.org/board-and-committees>

SURS currently employs approximately 148 staff, located in offices in Champaign and Naperville, Illinois.

A copy of SURS' most recent comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) is available for review, or to download, at [www.surs.org](http://www.surs.org).

## **Nomination and Application Process**

### **Salary**

The salary is competitive and commensurate with qualifications and experience.

### **How to Apply**

Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc., an executive search firm, is assisting the SURS in the search. Review of confidential applications and nominations will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Screening of candidates will begin immediately. A complete application includes a letter of interest describing experience relevant to the position requirements; current resume/curriculum vitae; and contact information for five professional references. Nominations should include the nominee's name, position, address, telephone number and email. Application materials should be submitted electronically as PDF attachments.

Confidential inquiries, nominations and application materials should be directed to:

Marion Frenche, Practice Leader, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Search Manager and Senior Executive Search Consultant  
Itza Walters, Executive Search Consultant  
Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc.  
42 Business Center Drive,  
Suite 206 Miramar Beach, Florida 32550  
Phone: 850-650-2277 / Fax: 850-650-2272  
Email: [marionfrenche@greenwoodsearch.com](mailto:marionfrenche@greenwoodsearch.com)  
Email: [itzawalters@greenwoodsearch.com](mailto:itzawalters@greenwoodsearch.com)

**Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc.**  
**Executive Search, Consulting and Training**

For more information about SURS, please visit <http://www.surs.com/>

*SURS does not discriminate because of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, military status, certain unfavorable discharges from military service, political affiliation, citizenship, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental handicap or disability or any other characteristic protected by law. It is the System's intent to comply with all state, federal, and local equal employment and opportunity laws and public policies.*