

# VIEWCREST ADVISORS

Chief Executive Officer

Position Description

2019



## THE ORGANIZATION:

Say Yes to Education (Say Yes) is a pioneering national nonprofit that has successfully increased high school graduation rates, student achievement and college attendance in whole cities, mobilizing the stakeholders in those cities and creating a sustainable infrastructure for the future.

At the heart of the Say Yes strategy is a powerful incentive: the prospect of a college scholarship, whether to an in-state public institution or to the more than 100+ private colleges and universities in the Say Yes National Higher Education Compact. With a goal of ensuring that students have the support outside the classroom to clear the path to postsecondary participation and success, Say Yes helps to bring together -- and galvanize -- stakeholders, to include city or county government, corporate leaders, families, philanthropy, school districts, community-based organizations, religious leaders, institutions of higher education and other civic partners. Say Yes then arms that local coalition with the tools, systems and structures that enable the work to scale and be sustained through predictable transitions in community leadership, and historically unpredictable funding from state/local sources.

Say Yes was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss, who boldly promised 112 sixth graders at a Philadelphia elementary school that he would pay to send them to college if they graduated high school. Weiss also provided those economically-disadvantaged students and their families with the academic and social-emotional support services necessary to seize that opportunity. He made similar promises, over the next two decades, to five additional cohorts of public school children, ranging in size from 50 to 300.

More recently, Say Yes has focused on communitywide chapters in Syracuse and Buffalo, and Guilford County, North Carolina. The approach is built on a Theory of Action, with the following pillars of investment:

- Establishment of a commitment device in the form of a locally raised scholarship incentive program that is universal, sustainable, and addresses equity
- Implementation of the Say Yes Postsecondary Planning System to inform continuous improvement at the student and aggregate levels
- Implementation of the Say Yes cross sector governance model used to scale and sustain student and family supports
- Provision of Comprehensive Academic and non-academic supports from birth to post-secondary completion

These academic, social-emotional and health-and-wellness support services -- as well as its scholarships -- are available to about 165,000 public school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 16. In January 2019, the city of Cleveland was officially announced as the next Say Yes partner community. Exciting results include:

- \$142 million in scholarships and grants awarded
- Dramatically increased high school graduation rates
- Significantly increased postsecondary matriculations rates
- Provision of academic and non-academic support services at scale for all students
- Significant reductions in foster care placements
- Over \$190 million raised locally by scholarship funds

The organization recently launched the Weiss Institute, a consulting-based unit that complements the organization's current, more time- and resource-intensive operations. Most importantly, the Institute allows Say Yes to Education to scale up its current approach in more communities, with a goal of changing even more lives.

For more information about Say Yes, please visit: [www.sayyestoeducation.org](http://www.sayyestoeducation.org)

## THE OPPORTUNITY:

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will take leadership of Say Yes' national organization at a moment of inflection. This is an outstanding opportunity for a passionate leader to guide this 30-year old organization into its next phase of impact, an endeavor demanding: educational vision; fundraising talent; entrepreneurial instinct; a naturally collaborative work style; and a track record leading transformational change.

**Reporting to:** Board of Directors

**Location:** New York City, N.Y. or Hartford, CT. (with significant travel nationally)

## Responsibilities:

- Inspire all of Say Yes' constituents; as chief spokesperson, champion Say Yes' mission, values and work to a variety of city-based, national and education reform audiences
- Drive Say Yes national's pathway to sustainability and ongoing strategy refinement
- Attract, cultivate and develop relationships across multiple funding segments (institutional foundations, family foundations, individual donors, etc.); personally secure significant donations
- Ensure Say Yes' story and impact are shared in powerful ways that call donors and partners to action
- Support the board as it builds its own fundraising capacity, and in its critical governance work
- Partner effectively across Say Yes' network; cultivate learning within and across chapters
- Develop a staff structure, and culture, of fundraising
- Mentor and inspire a small, nimble team in New York City and Hartford
- Ensure clarity of staff roles across all functional areas (program, development/fundraising, operations), aligned to Say Yes' strategy and objectives
- Model, cultivate and reinforce a positive, collaborative, accountable team culture
- Oversee forward-thinking investments in people and systems
- Drive effective planning, budgeting, measurement and reporting
- Ensure operational excellence and alignment of core functions (finance, communications, HR, IT)

## QUALIFICATIONS:

The Chief Executive Officer will have a deep personal commitment to equity and access for high need students. With significant C-level experience, s/he must bring proven success:

- Identifying, cultivating, and securing significant philanthropic (institutional and major gift) resources
- Partnering with a board, with the capacity to attract and engage strong, committed board members
- As a collaborative manager and mentor
- Leading an organization's transformation (turnaround or step-change growth)

The C.E.O. will ideally bring knowledge of place-based initiatives.

Leadership characteristics should include:

- An ability to think both strategically and creatively
- A collaborative, inclusive and responsive style
- An authentic relationship orientation: builds respectful partnerships in complex environments; brings political savvy and sound judgment to know when to inspire diverse groups from out front or to champion their efforts from behind
- An ability to persuasively share student stories in the media and to multiple audiences
- Transparency, determination, passion, discipline, fairness, humility and maturity

# VIEWCREST ADVISORS

Say Yes to Education, Inc. is committed to diversity and inclusion. As an equal opportunity employer, Say Yes to Education, Inc. does not discriminate in hiring or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Viewcrest Advisors is committed to social justice and access to opportunity; we actively cultivate relationships with leaders who have varied life experiences as well as the skills needed to lead strong, innovative organizations.

Please share nominations or submit a resume and cover letter, in MS Word format, to Kathleen Yazbak, President and Nora Nichols, Associate at Viewcrest Advisors: [apply@viewcrestadvisors.com](mailto:apply@viewcrestadvisors.com)

## Representative press coverage:

"Cleveland, Ohio, Selected to Be Latest Partner Community of Say Yes to Education," Business Wire (2019)  
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190118005066/en/Cleveland-Ohio-Selected-Latest-Partner-Community-Education>

"A Rust Belt City's School Turnaround," The Atlantic (2017)  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/07/a-rust-belt-citys-school-turnaround/534006/>

"The Promise: A Case Study of Say Yes to Education in Buffalo," by Robert Frahm (2016)  
[http://edfunders.org/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%2015%20Buffalo\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://edfunders.org/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%2015%20Buffalo_final_2.pdf)