



**BETHESDA**  
ACADEMY

Position Statement  
President Search

# Bethesda Academy

Savannah, Georgia  
Start Date: July 1, 2025



# PRESIDENT POSITION STATEMENT



## OVERVIEW

Located on 650 acres of woods, fields, and marsh a few miles from historic Savannah, Bethesda Academy encompasses approximately 90 boys from sixth through twelfth grade who want and deserve a chance to succeed. Embodying the ethos of its founder, the Rev. George Whitefield, Bethesda teaches students that “a love of God, a love of learning, and a strong work ethic,” are the foundation for building men of character, integrity, and resilience. Originally founded as a home and a school for orphans in colonial Georgia 283 years ago, Bethesda may be the oldest institution of its kind in the country. Its legacy of success has yielded many who are now college graduates, skilled workers, and military personnel.

Bethesda is academically, socioeconomically, and racially diverse by design. That underpinning supports a platform sustaining the “whole person” through a curriculum which addresses each of the timeless values established in 1740 by Whitefield. Bethesda’s commitment to these values is evident in hands-on learning experiences that encourage exploration and entrepreneurship. The small classes, a highly structured environment, and a strong sense of home and community focused on spiritual development facilitate each boy’s development. This student-centered program leaves no doubt in the mind of each young man that he is valued and that the faculty and staff are all working for his ultimate success as a servant leader in the larger world.



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## MISSION

Bethesda Academy offers a transformative educational experience that promotes traditional academic skills paired with active “hands-on” learning and strong athletic and co-curricular programs to prepare each graduate to succeed in his collegiate, vocational, or military endeavors after high school.

## THE POSITION

After eight years, President H. Michael Hughes is retiring after a distinguished career in the armed forces and 25 years as head of school at several institutions. He came at a moment when the Board of Governors completed a strategic plan focusing on leadership, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. That plan, Lead the Way, has now been substantially completed. The next president will be part of the process of developing a new plan.



## HISTORY

Originally called Bethesda Orphan House and Academy, Bethesda began as a combination orphanage and school when it was founded by the Rev. George Whitefield, a leading evangelist in the Great Awakening of the 1740s, a movement that is credited with spreading a more participatory religion among Americans and laying seeds that came to fruition in the American Revolution. In its early years, it received notable support from Benjamin Franklin and residents of Philadelphia and New York who responded to Whitefield’s appeals for donations.

Over its history, the school has grown organically into the educational institution that it is today. In 1900, it was renamed the Bethesda Home for Boys, with the boys attending the nearest public school. In 1992, Bethesda began adding a grade a year starting with the youngest students. In 2005, it graduated its first class. In 2011, the school was formally rebranded Bethesda Academy, reflecting its commitment to a college preparatory education. Today, Bethesda is a successful middle and high school that serves a diverse population that focuses on integrated learning and spiritual development. The 650-acre campus provides a wide range of learning experiences rooted in Whitefield’s founding mission.

# PRESIDENT POSITION STATEMENT



## THE SCHOOL

Bethesda Academy is a learning center with many strengths. Foremost among them is a talented and committed faculty of twelve people, who make real the school's mission-driven commitment to individual attention in small classes and outdoor activities. They act as mentors and teachers. The Academy is fully accredited by Cognia-SACS and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools.

Located just 12 miles from downtown Savannah and overlooking the famed Moon River, Bethesda provides a stunning natural setting. The campus features 650 acres of fields and woods, punctuated by historic brick buildings, sprawling live oaks and panoramic views of the marsh. The school offers waterfront vistas, stunning timber reserves, cattle, a hunting preserve, and an organic garden.

Teaching at Bethesda is student-centered with differentiated instruction tailored to the needs of the learner. Faculty members utilize hands-on, active learning approaches that leverage the natural learning styles of boys to obtain maximum learning/retention value. The teacher to student ratio averages 9:1 (12 teachers for 90-100 boys, not counting additional part-time athletic coaches). Each classroom includes an interactive "smart board" and each student utilizes a laptop computer provided by the school (1:1 program) to leverage technology and the ability to conduct thorough research and maximize learning opportunities.



## STUDENT LIFE

Many students are from families at or below the federal poverty line or from single-parent families. Others come from parents of greater means. Having experienced academic difficulty in traditional school settings, they find common ground at Bethesda in a setting that affirms them while challenging them. The boys see themselves as a band of brothers united by their common experiences in a way that transcends differences of backgrounds, cultures, and skin color. A strong sense of brotherhood is a distinguishing feature of this school.

Spiritual life is an important part of Bethesda's culture and is a pervasive part of every classroom and playing field. The school's non-sectarian Christian program reminds students that they are loved by God and encourages them to uphold God's values. Students pursue spiritual development through bible study classes, weekly chapel services, and staff devotionals.

For athletics, students may participate in football, basketball, and track and field. The school is strongly committed to athletics and believes that team sports provide an important way for boys to learn self-discipline and teamwork. The Academy participates in the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA). In 2023, the football team won the SCISA Class A state championship in a closely matched game. The basketball team has won two SCISA state championships while the track team has been state runner-up.

# PRESIDENT POSITION STATEMENT



## FINANCES

Bethesda has a unique financial model that focuses on making an educational experience possible for any boy whose family is willing to collaborate with the Academy on the student's behalf. Based on a third-party analysis of financial aid applications, the Academy provides a considerable scholarship package to students who qualify for assistance. Bethesda is blessed by a substantial endowment of \$25 million and an aggressive fundraising program. The school raises the majority of its operating income from the Annual Fund, bequests, campus rentals, special events, and major gifts of all sizes from a loyal donor base. Bethesda is unique in that its operations are not tuition-driven.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The next President of Bethesda Academy should be a dedicated educator, willing to support and lead a boys' Christian educational experience. The school will need to be led wisely and confidently into the future by embracing the school's current challenges. There will be an opportunity for the next President to:

- Help develop and implement a new strategic plan for Bethesda.
- Recruit and retain talented faculty who embrace the mission of the school to work with a diverse student population within a Christian framework.
- Clarify and market the identity of the school in the Savannah community.
- Establish the school as a national model in the education of boys.
- Evaluate the school's administrative structure to ensure efficiency.
- Examine all the business aspects of the school and determine their importance and relevance to the school's mission.
- Work with the Board of Governors to secure the school's future financial sustainability.



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## KEY QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to be President of Bethesda Academy will be the school's chief executive officer, responsible for implementing the vision, mission, and strategic objectives of the school. The school seeks a spiritual, amicable, decisive leader who is a visionary relationship builder and is business savvy. Specific responsibilities include:

- Serving as the "face of the school" to all its constituents, including students, parents, teachers, staff, neighbors, and the local business community.
- Developing and managing relationships with current and prospective parents, current and prospective donors, and other relevant constituencies throughout the surrounding area.
- Working with the faculty leaders to ensure that the school's academic programs are being implemented at consistently high levels of quality.
- Overseeing the financial operations of the school.
- Leading fundraising efforts and increasing and clarifying the reputation of the school in the Savannah community.



## THE CANDIDATE MUST

- Demonstrate exceptional communication skills that promote transparency and convey what makes Bethesda Academy special.
- Have experience as an educational leader, preferably with boys' education.
- Desire to be visible and engaged.
- Have the ability to inspire and lead faculty.
- Enjoy and demonstrate fund-raising ability.
- Be able to partner with the Board to build a shared strategic vision that will lead to a clearer, more focused identity.
- Embrace a non-sectarian Christian education.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Bethesda Academy retained the firm Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support its search for a new President. If you wish to submit your application, please do so at: <https://rg175.com/candidates/signup>

Application includes:

- Letter of interest (cover letter)
- Resume or CV
- A personal, leadership or educational philosophy statement
- Names of four current references and contact information

The deadline for receipt of full application materials is **September 30, 2024**.

For any questions or further information about the position, please contact:

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