



2021 SRS Board of Directors Candidate

Director-at-Large

Cathy Alessi, MD



I've carefully reviewed the commitments involved and I am happy to confirm my strongest willingness to serve in this position if selected. I have been an active member of the SRS for over 20 years, with 8 years of membership on the SRS Scientific Review Committee (including prior Vice Chair and current Chair of this committee). I am deeply committed to the mission of the SRS. As an SRS Director-at-Large, I would dedicate myself to the service of SRS members and trainees, the success of the organization, and the advancement of sleep and circadian science.

I am a scientist, academician and leader with nearly three decades of experience in clinical and translational research on sleep and aging. My expertise is in human subjects research, primarily focused on intervention development and methodologically rigorous controlled trials testing novel behavioral approaches to address insomnia and sleep apnea in older adults. I am a Professor in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) David Geffen School of Medicine, where I sit on the Department of Medicine Committee on Appointments and Promotions, and the UCLA Academic Senate Legislative Assembly. I am also an investigator in the Veterans Administration (VA) here in Los Angeles, where I am the Director of the VA Greater Los Angeles Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), which is a highly regarded interdisciplinary center of excellence with a large portfolio of aging research focused on sleep, cognitive disorders and vulnerable elders. I founded the Sleep Research Group in the VA Greater Los Angeles GRECC, which has grown to become a highly regarded program, well-funded by NIH, VA and foundation support. As a physician, I am board certified in Internal Medicine, Geriatric Medicine, and Sleep Medicine and I have worked as a clinician scientist throughout my academic career.

The SRS Nomination Procedures document mentions several characteristics that are desirable in at least some Board members. Of these listed characteristics, I bring my experience in past leadership roles with other societies and past (and current) service to the SRS. As an example of my leadership roles in other societies, for 10 years (ending in 2015) I was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Geriatrics Society (the national professional organization for geriatricians), where I also served as a Treasurer, President and Chair of the Board of Directors for that organization. I am also a Past Chair for Health Sciences in the Gerontological Society of America (ending in 2012), an interdisciplinary organization focused on aging and gerontology. I've also been involved in the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, as a past Chair of the Circadian Rhythms section, a past member of the Standards of Practice Committee and a past member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. At my home institution at the VA Greater Los Angeles, I've had extensive committee and leadership experience, with membership on various Institutional Review Boards, research committees, search committees and programmatic review committees. I've sat on various grant review panels and study sections for NIH and the VA (including several years of membership on a VA Career Development Award panel) and ad hoc committee work for other national and international funding organizations. I've also mentored numerous students, post-doctoral fellows and junior faculty from a variety of professional backgrounds who have moved on to successful research careers.

In terms of service to the SRS, as mentioned above I have been a member of the SRS Scientific Review Committee (formerly known as the Research Committee) since 2013. As you know, the Scientific Review Committee oversees the full award process for both the SRSF Career Development Awards and the SRS Outstanding Early Investigator Awards. This work includes the development of application documents and procedures, applicant eligibility and review guidelines (which are reviewed and approved by the SRS BOD), and the committee's careful process for reviewing and scoring the large number of applications received for these two important early stage awards for investigators in sleep and circadian science. During my tenure as Chair the SRS Scientific Review Committee, we formalized our review process based on best practices of scientific review and reconfigured our calendar to spread the work more evenly across the year. My approach to my role as Chair of this committee is to foster an environment of inclusiveness, mutual respect, professionalism and collaboration, which I believe is reflected in the high degree of participation and high retention rate of members on this very busy committee.

On a personal level, I believe I have the essential characteristics for SRS BOD members, as described in the SRS Nomination Procedures document. I am strategic and creative in research, teaching and administration. I try to work with wisdom, and I consider myself an effective communicator and collaborator. I am regularly amazed by the breakthroughs in our field, especially in areas outside my expertise, and I am extremely appreciative of every opportunity to learn. I am committed to the SRS, and I appreciate this opportunity to self-nominate as a candidate for the BOD as a Director-at-Large.