



Cornell University®

Boyden Executive Search Contact

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Culture of Inclusion and Community Standards

As a university founded to be a place where "...any person can find instruction in any study," inclusion and belonging are at the core of Cornell's values and mission. Cornell University strives to be a welcoming, caring, healthy community where students, faculty, and staff with different backgrounds, perspectives, abilities, and experiences can learn, innovate, and work in an environment of respect, and feel empowered to engage in any community conversation. As members of the Cornell University community, individuals share a responsibility to cultivate a culture of inclusion for all.

Department Background

Annual and Leadership Giving (ALG) brings together in one dynamic and innovative team Cornell's annual giving efforts with a primary focus on securing the unrestricted current use gifts that power Cornell year over year. The team drives success for Cornell's priority, renewable giving – chiefly our Cornell and College & Unit Annual Funds – and defines strategy and outcomes for those efforts. ALG's work spans annual giving, leadership giving, Giving Day, and both staff and volunteer-led fundraising efforts. The team raises essential support for the university and plays a key role in building our donor pipeline for the future.

Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) of Annual and Leadership Giving is the senior institutional leader accountable for the strategy, performance, and continuous evolution of Cornell University's annual and leadership giving program.

The ED is responsible for overseeing the annual and leadership giving model at Cornell and for ensuring that it delivers sustained growth in unrestricted, broad-based, and leadership giving with a strategic focus on growing the annual fund, strong donor retention, upgrading donor investment, and maintaining a healthy pipeline. This role sets the overall direction, defines success, aligns resources across the team verticals, and makes ongoing strategic adjustments in response to performance, donor behavior, and institutional priorities.

Reporting to the Senior Associate Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Development, the ED manages a dynamic team of approximately 23, including five program leads, and provides strategic leadership for the team and across central and unit-based annual giving functions ensuring that all team leads and verticals operate cohesively to achieve shared and measurable

goals and desired outcomes. The ED also works closely with the Annual Fund National Chair and other trustees to advance the overall strategy and drive fundraising success.

The ED actively engages as a senior leader in efforts to advance the goals, mission, and values of the Division.

Position Responsibilities

Strategic Direction

- Direct Cornell's annual and leadership giving strategy, operating framework, and performance expectations.
- Ensure clarity and consistency across all team annual and leadership giving verticals and shared KPIs, including University and College & Unit annual giving efforts.
- Establish multi-year strategy and annual priorities for annual and leadership giving aligned with institutional goals and KPIs for overall revenue, retention, and pipeline.
- Set goals and success measures and allocate focus across team verticals to maximize impact, setting the balance and priorities across audiences, programs, and investments.
- Anticipate external trends and shifts in donor behavior and adapt strategy accordingly.
- Periodically assess the effectiveness of the annual and leadership giving model and make strategic adjustments as needed.
- Form a strong working relationship with Annual Fund National Chair and other trustees who can play a role in driving fundraising results.

Organizational Leadership

- Provide leadership and oversight for Annual and Leadership Giving team leaders.
- Establish clear roles, decision rights, and accountability structures.
- Oversee the solicitation assignment of approximately 10,000 prospects, determining the most efficacious tactics and assignments to staff and volunteers.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, clarity, and results orientation.
- Review performance across all verticals and diagnose systemic strengths and weaknesses, making course corrections as needed.
- Use performance insights to guide strategic decisions and adjustments.

Collaboration Across Division

- Ensure effective integration of annual and leadership giving with Prospect Management, Communications & Marketing, Advancement Services, Alumni Affairs, the Parents Program, Donor Relations, and Major and Principal Gifts.
- Establish strong working relationships with AVPs for College & Units and other stakeholders and shared expectations for collaboration, handoffs, and information flow.
- Resolve cross-functional issues and remove barriers that impede performance or donor experience.

Data Analytics and Decisions Framework

- Define performance metrics, frameworks, and decision tools (e.g., goal-setting structures, forecasting models, and pipeline indicators).
- Ensure that analytics and reporting capabilities support strategic decision-making at the enterprise level.
- Use data to inform prioritization, resource allocation, and model refinement, without direct ownership of tactical analysis or reporting production.
- Provide high-level reporting on strategies and outcomes for AVP, SAVP, and trustees and other leaders as needed.
- Manage department budgets and provide training and other growth opportunities for team leaders and staff.

Other Position-Related Responsibilities

- Seek out and attend university and other training programs essential for job performance.
- Keep current with existing and emerging technologies and methodologies relevant to the position.
- Continuously maintain all required educational and position qualifications to fulfil job requirements.
- Be an active member of the team by attending meetings as requested and providing ideas and recommendations to further departmental goals.
- Participate in projects or perform other duties as assigned, including occasional responsibilities that may fall above or below the current classification.
- Complete any university-required compliance training.

Required Qualifications

- A bachelor's degree and a minimum of ten years of fundraising or related experience.
- Expertise and track record of success leading an annual giving program.

Preferred Qualifications

- Senior leadership experience in annual giving, leadership giving, or closely related advancement functions within a complex organization.
- Demonstrated success leading mature fundraising enterprises with accountability for enterprise outcomes.
- High comfort using data and performance insights to guide decision-making.
- Exceptional communication and cross-functional leadership skills.
- Ability to provide management oversight, leadership, and direction with at least five years of significant supervisory experience.
- Strength in developing strategic and comprehensive fundraising plans and executing against these plans to achieve goals and objectives.
- Ability to articulate Cornell's mission, priorities, and goals to compel others to action.
- A strong record of recruiting and developing exceptional people and fostering a transparent and inclusive work environment where collegiality is a key to success.
- Ability to develop trust and strong collaborative working relationships.

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About Boyden Global Executive Search

Established in 1946, Boyden pioneered the first organized approach to executive search. Boyden has a network of more than 350 professionals in over 75 offices in 45 countries. Worldwide, the Boyden culture is based on professionalism, integrity, high personal partner involvement, and a commitment to exceed client expectations.

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