

Columbia
COLLEGE CHICAGO

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VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT 2025



COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO

VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Columbia College Chicago invites applications and nominations for the position of Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement.

The Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement (VPDAE or Vice President) reports directly to President Shantay N. Bolton and serves as a key member of her Cabinet. The Vice President will lead a comprehensive advancement program that inspires philanthropic investment and deepens alumni pride and participation. This position will oversee all fundraising, donor relations, and alumni engagement functions with a clear focus on major gifts, campaign readiness, and long-term philanthropic growth. As the College embarks on a new chapter of institutional transformation, the Vice President will play a critical role in shaping the case for support, cultivating a culture of giving, and building strategic partnerships to fuel student success and creative excellence.

This position is responsible for designing and implementing comprehensive institutional advancement programs, including major gifts, annual giving, corporate and foundation relations, alumni and constituent relations, and capital and endowment campaigns. The VPDAE will lead the Development and Alumni Engagement division and set priorities and devise strategies for college-wide objectives.

The new Vice President will be a seasoned advancement professional who is excited and energized by the mission of Columbia College Chicago, by the College's vision for the future, by a belief in the transformative power of higher education, and by the role that a creative arts college plays in society. The successful candidate will bring exceptional communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage diverse audiences and inspire investment. They will demonstrate skill in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship, as well as experience leading capital campaigns, strategic initiatives, and multi-year fundraising efforts. A minimum of ten years of progressively responsible leadership in fundraising or advancement work is required.

Founded in 1890, Columbia College Chicago is a private, not-for-profit college whose curriculum is focused on the creative disciplines, including academic programs in film and theatre, communications and writing, media and digital arts, music and sound, performing arts, visual arts, and business and management. Located in the heart of downtown Chicago's Cultural Mile, Columbia College Chicago thrives within a vibrant cultural landscape, leveraging the city's artistic and professional opportunities to deliver a unique student experience. Columbia's unique culture is rooted in social progress and in serving a creative community of approximately 4,500 students, 170+ full time and 400+ part-time faculty, and 400+ staff members. To learn more about Columbia College Chicago, visit: colum.edu

POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

As the leader of Development and Alumni Engagement, the Vice President's responsibilities include:

Strategic Leadership and Vision:

- Reimagine, develop, and execute a bold, integrated advancement strategy that aligns with Columbia's mission, values, and institutional priorities.
- Serve as the President's principal advisor on all matters related to fundraising, donor engagement, and alumni relations.
- Establish long-term philanthropic goals and metrics in support of enrollment, scholarships, academic innovation, facilities, and student services.

Fundraising and Campaign Execution:

- Oversee the planning and execution of major fundraising campaigns, including the development of campaign strategies, timelines, volunteer structures, and donor pipelines.
- Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of high-level prospects and donors, including alumni, foundations, corporations, and friends of the College.

Alumni Relations and Engagement:

- Lead a reimagined alumni engagement strategy to deepen pride, participation, and giving among Columbia's creative and diverse alumni base.
- Foster connections between alumni and current students, faculty, and programs to build a vibrant, multi-generational Columbia community.

Donor Relations and Stewardship:

- Ensure a best-in-class donor experience by strengthening recognition programs, impact reporting, and personalized stewardship strategies.
- Build systems to track and evaluate donor engagement, retention, and satisfaction.

Team Leadership and Operational Oversight:

- Provide strategic direction and mentorship to a growing Development and Alumni Engagement team across major gifts, annual giving, alumni relations, development operations, and corporate/foundation relations.
 - Lead with a spirit of collaboration, transparency, accountability, and results.
 - Ensure systems, technology, and advancement operations are optimized to support performance and reporting.
- Collaboration and Institutional Engagement:**
- Partner with Deans, School Directors, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, and institutional leaders to articulate compelling philanthropic opportunities.
 - Represent the College in donor meetings, events, and public forums with professionalism, authenticity, and vision.

Perform other related duties and responsibilities as assigned or required.

QUALIFICATIONS AND PREFERRED ATTRIBUTES

- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.
- A minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible leadership in fundraising, institutional advancement, alumni engagement, or nonprofit development.
- Proven track record of securing major and transformational gifts, ideally in a higher education or mission-driven environment.
- Experience leading capital campaigns, strategic initiatives, or multi-year fundraising efforts.
- Demonstrated skill in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship with demonstrated success engaging diverse alumni, parents, friends, corporations, and foundations. Experience building strategic industry partnerships is preferred.
- Demonstrated ability to design and implement innovative alumni relations strategies that foster lifelong affinity, engagement, and giving.
- Exceptional communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to serve as a visible ambassador for Columbia College Chicago and inspire investment.
- Strong understanding of advancement best/promising practices, fundraising operations, data analytics, CRM systems, and compliance regulations.
- A consensus builder who enjoys cross-departmental collaboration. Able to create excitement and energy around Columbia's mission and encourage others to support the College.
- Demonstrated ability to work with colleagues, boards, alumni councils, volunteers, parents, and friends of higher education and comfort in making a gift appeal in person, on the telephone, and in writing is required.
- Ability to represent the Institutional Advancement Office and Columbia College Chicago professionally as a visible public ambassador.
- Proven commitment to advancing varied fundraising initiatives, alumni programming and team leadership; and cultural competence in engaging diverse stakeholders.
- Ability to create and articulate a compelling vision for alumni engagement and development, aligning advancement strategy with institutional priorities and Columbia's distinctive mission in the arts, media, and communication fields.
- Demonstrated success in leading, motivating, and mentoring advancement teams. Ability to foster collaboration, accountability, and professional growth.
- Strong grasp of budgeting, resource management, and aligning advancement goals with institutional priorities.
- Experience in project planning and marketing communication.
- Strong personal integrity, judgement, and work ethic.

ABOUT COLUMBIA



Founded in 1890, Columbia College Chicago is a private, not-for-profit college whose curriculum is focused on creative disciplines. Its schools include:

- School of Audio and Music
- School of Business and Entrepreneurship
- School of Communication and Culture
- School of Design
- School of Fashion
- School of Film and Television
- School of Theatre and Dance
- School of Visual Arts

Columbia's many competitive advantages include its strong reputation in the creative industries, outstanding faculty, passionate students, impressive technological and physical resources, and a commitment to bringing varied voices and experiences in proximity with each other to shape new forms of creative practice. Embracing an access mission, enrollment grew dramatically from just over 200 students in the early 1970s to approximately 4,500 students today. The modern-day College is an institution that represents the expanding role of creative practice in society, and it stands out as a beacon for those seeking to thrive in the dynamic and growing creative economy.

The College's specialized programs that bridge the gap between mastery of creative disciplines and broader educational preparation are what distinguishes Columbia from its peer institutions. Faculty members bring real-world experience and industry connections to the classroom to enhance students' learning experiences. Columbia's programs and faculty have outstanding reputations in their fields. In annual surveys, the Hollywood Reporter consistently ranks Columbia's film program and music composition for the screen MA program as among the top programs in the United States, and the College's

animation, comedy studies, photography, visual effects, and video game design programs have received similar accolades.

Chicago's influence on Columbia extends beyond its role as a backdrop for academic pursuits; it is also a vital part of the College's ethos and mission. Located in downtown Chicago's South Loop, Columbia is centered in one of the world's most lively urban areas and is intrinsically linked to the city's rich cultural landscape and dynamic arts scene. Occupying more than a dozen academic, administrative, and residence life buildings in the South Loop neighborhood, and a part of the city's central business district, the campus offers unparalleled opportunities for students to engage with Chicago's communities and creative industries.

In 2019, Columbia opened a new \$55 million, 114,000 square-foot student center, representing a major investment in the quality of the student experience. The College also leases classroom, studio, and office space in Los Angeles for the Semester in LA program. Columbia College Chicago's Semester in Los Angeles (SiLA) program is an immersive, professional development experience that places juniors and seniors in the heart of the entertainment industry. Students spend a semester living in Los Angeles, completing internships with leading studios, production companies, music labels, and talent agencies while taking courses taught by industry professionals and Columbia faculty. Designed as a capstone to their academic studies, the program provides direct exposure to the business and creative practices of film, television, and music, while also connecting students with Columbia's extensive alumni network in Los Angeles. Through SiLA, students gain the skills, experience, and professional relationships needed to launch successful careers in creative industries.

LEADERSHIP AND VALUES



LEADERSHIP



Dr. Shantay N. Bolton

became the 11th President on July 1, 2025. She is the first woman in nearly 90 years and the first woman of color to lead the institution. President Bolton is recognized as a transformational leader and effective strategist.

Most recently, President Bolton served as the Executive Vice President of Administration and Finance, and Chief Business Officer at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). She successfully fulfilled similar administrative duties in her prior positions at Washington University in St. Louis and Tulane University in New Orleans.

At Georgia Tech, President Bolton managed a \$3.1 billion enterprise and built and nurtured relationships with a host of internal constituencies as well as with the government and private sectors. She served as a board member of the Georgia Tech Research Corporation, Georgia Advanced Technology Ventures, Midtown Alliance, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO).

President Bolton possesses a distinguished academic background, holding a B.S. and M.S. in psychology from Alabama A&M University, an MBA from Florida International University, and a Ph.D. in organizational psychology from Walden University. An adjunct professor of practice in Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business, she has taught in multiple settings.

MISSION STATEMENT

Columbia's purpose is:

- to educate students for creative occupations in diverse fields of the arts and media and to encourage awareness of their aesthetic relationship and the opportunity of professional choice among them;
- to extend educational opportunity by admitting unreservedly (at the undergraduate level) a student population with creative ability in, or inclination to, the subjects of Columbia's interest; to provide a college climate that offers students an opportunity to try themselves out, to explore, and to discover what they can and want to do;
- to give educational emphasis to the work of a subject by providing a practical setting, professional facilities, and the example and guidance of an inventive faculty who work professionally at the subjects they teach;
- to teach students to do expertly the work they like, to master the crafts of their intended occupations, and to discover alternative opportunities to employ their talents in settings other than customary marketplaces;
- to help students to find out who they are and to discover their own voices, respect their own individuality, and improve their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- to offer specialized graduate programs which combine a strong conceptual emphasis with practical professional education, preparing students with mature interests to be both competent artists and successful professionals.

STATEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

The college embodies a joy of exploration, discovery, and innovation, attracting students who are passionate about making a difference through their art practice. Columbia provides a structured yet flexible environment where these students can develop their unique voices, explore their creativity, and acquire the business skills needed to succeed professionally. This supportive atmosphere allows students to author the culture of their times while pursuing their creative and professional goals.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

AGB Search is pleased to assist Columbia College Chicago with this leadership search.

To apply for the Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement position, candidates are requested to submit the following:

(i) resume;

(ii) a letter of interest that addresses how the candidate's experiences and qualifications connect with the required/preferred characteristics and priorities as expressed in this position profile; and

(iii) contact information for five references (to be contacted with candidate's permission at a later date).

Application materials should be submitted to the VP for Development and Alumni Engagement Application Portal (<https://bit.ly/3I1Un3i>) by October 17th, 2025 for best consideration. The search will remain open until an appointment is made.

Nominations and expressions of interest in the Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement position are encouraged. Please direct them to ColumbiaCollegeChicagoVPDev@agbsearch.com or to the AGB Search consultants listed below:

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