

Kenyon

Vice President for Advancement

Kenyon College

Gambier, OH

THE SEARCH

A champion for the transformative power of the liberal arts, Kenyon College seeks a creative, passionate, and sophisticated fundraising leader to serve as the next vice president for advancement. This individual will join Kenyon following the arrival of [President Julie Kornfeld](#) in 2023, the celebration of the college's bicentennial in 2024, and the record-breaking completion of a \$532 million comprehensive campaign the same year. The dawn of Kenyon's third century gives way for reflection on all the college has accomplished over the last 200 years, while inspiring its leadership to adapt and innovate for the future. Kenyon's next vice president will be an advocate for the liberal arts and a thought partner to the president, helping to guide the college's strategic direction as a key member of an evolving executive leadership team. The vice president will work with President Kornfeld, peer leaders, board members, donors, and staff to reinforce Kenyon's position and strength in a changing higher education landscape while maintaining the college's rigorous approach to the traditional liberal arts that prepares its graduates for lives of purpose and consequence.

Kenyon is an institution steeped in unique traditions, lifelong connections to people and place, and an enduring affinity among its alumni and supporters. More than 60 percent of Kenyon's 23,000 living alumni contributed to the last campaign. However, philanthropy at Kenyon is also evolving. The next vice president will be an innovator prepared to leverage industry-wide technological advancements, such as the use of artificial intelligence, while also responding to new college-specific opportunities. With nearly one-half of alumni having graduated since 2000, the college must develop future generations of Kenyon donors at all levels of the giving pyramid while continuing to strengthen its efforts in alumni engagement and non-alumni engagement and giving. The profile of Kenyon's most influential donors has also shifted through the emergence of a new generation of alumni joining the college's highest-level supporters. Their investment in Kenyon has now sparked *Third Century Founders*—a two-year initiative focused on endowment support from principal-gift-level donors that is currently under development.

The next vice president will build upon existing success and lead the continued growth and evolution of a highly regarded, well established advancement operation. The role includes oversight of a multifunctional division across major, principal, and planned giving; advancement information services; advancement

communications and strategy; alumni and parent engagement; and annual giving, including the Kenyon Fund and the Kenyon Parent Fund. In total, the vice president will manage a budget of approximately \$1.2 million and an advancement operation that received \$70 million and secured \$20 in new attainment in Fiscal Year 2024. They will lead a team of approximately 40 professionals across a cohesive enterprise that prides itself on collaboration, achievement, commitment to mission, and an exceptionally strong team culture.

In addition to guiding the team, the vice president will personally participate in the identification, cultivation, and solicitation of high-level prospects, and will become an active and visible member in the college community, balancing their time and presence both on campus and around the globe. The vice president will also work with the president and trustees to ensure the effective use of their time and maximization of their success, serving as the principal advisor on advancement and guiding and partnering with the president in the cultivation of Kenyon's most transformational donors. Success for the next vice president will, in part, be defined by an ability to educate and engage all members of the Kenyon community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and senior administrators—in advancement efforts, connecting individuals not only to Kenyon's 200-year legacy, but also to its ambitious and trailblazing future as a global leader in liberal arts education.

The next vice president will be a strategic, visionary, and high-performing leader capable of building upon a strong existing program to deliver creative and entrepreneurial fundraising strategies, clear and achievable goals, and data-informed risk-taking and decision-making in a changing higher education landscape. The vice president must be a superb storyteller with extraordinary skills that include crafting multiple compelling cases for support, and engaging and building authentic relationships with the college's broad range of constituencies. The successful candidate will reflect and embody the values of Kenyon, leading advancement efforts and serving the college with warmth, humility, kindness, and humor. The successful candidate will demonstrate a high level of integrity and trust; have the ability to adapt in a dynamic environment; and exhibit authenticity, credibility, sophistication, empathy, and judgment to effectively engage and partner with all key internal and external members of the Kenyon community, building bridges and strong collaborative relationships across the college. A minimum of 10 to 15 years of leadership experience in fundraising, constituency engagement, and staff management is required, as is a comprehensive knowledge of strategies employed in all major development and alumni functions.

Kenyon College has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT KENYON COLLEGE

Founded in 1824, Kenyon is the oldest private college in Ohio and one of the nation's finest. Its academic excellence goes hand-in-hand with a strong sense of community, bringing together 1,750 young people to study with more than 200 professors on an exceptionally beautiful hilltop campus in central Ohio. Students, professors, and staff share in the ethos of Kenyon's community: embracing rigor and friendship.

Kenyon prides itself on the strength of its faculty—accomplished scholars who place the highest value on teaching. Its curriculum is rooted in the traditional liberal arts and sciences and enriched by interdisciplinary programs. Other highly notable academic pillars of its education are a distinguished literary tradition, as well as an emphasis on excellent written communication.

Leadership

Julie Kornfeld, PhD, MPH, 20th President of Kenyon College

Dr. Julie Kornfeld began her role as president on October 1, 2023. A champion of interdisciplinary collaboration, curricular innovation, and cross-cutting institutional partnerships, President Kornfeld previously served as vice provost for academic programs at Columbia University and as vice dean for education at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. Read more about President Kornfeld [here](#).

Board of Trustees

The Kenyon board of trustees consists of approximately 28 members. Trustees give of their time, talent, and resources to safeguard the traditions, assets, and values of the college; ensure the college's strategic direction and mission are followed and its enhanced capacity to serve society is met; and provide oversight and guidance for the activities of the college. The board is chaired by [Aileen C. Hefferren '88 H'12](#), former longtime CEO of Prep for Prep and CEO & Director of the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

Campus

Kenyon's beautiful 610-acre campus is in Gambier, Ohio, 45 miles from the state's capital, Columbus. Kenyon's campus is often cited as one of the most beautiful campuses in the country, and Kenyon College is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Kenyon blends the modern with the traditional, allowing the campus' timeless beauty to endure while responding to new needs and adopting new technologies.

Middle Path is the primary organizing element of campus, extending two-thirds of a mile from Bexley Hall at the north to Old Kenyon at the south. Middle Path connects the campus together as a central artery, uniting the historic and academic core, the Village of Gambier, and north campus.

The campus includes more than 140 buildings, including historic buildings representing a mix of handsome Gothic and Classical Revival buildings and white clapboard houses, as well as modern, state-of-the-art and architecturally stunning buildings constructed within the last decade such as the West Quad including a new library, a new academic building, a new building for admissions and financial aid, and extensive underground parking garage. Kenyon also recently completed two new residence halls, adding a total of 244 additional beds to campus, one which opened in January 2025 and the other to open in fall 2025. New construction is highly sustainable, ADA-compliant, and beautifully designed.

In addition to the thoughtfully planned built environment, the campus is also home to a nature preserve. The Brown Family Environmental Center offers beautiful gardens plus over 600 acres of woodland and prairie habitats, accessible by eight miles of hiking trails.

Financials

Given its impressive fundraising capability, solid cash and investments relative to operating expenses, competitive admissions, and sound management, Kenyon's financial position is strong. Kenyon's adjusted operating expense for Fiscal Year 2024 was \$206 million and its endowment is approximately \$626 million.

Tuition, room and board, and fees were \$87,160 for fall of 2024, which represented 81 percent of gross revenue, and the tuition discount rate was 47.7 percent. Together, these factors provide Kenyon with consistently strong bond ratings. In January 2024, Moody's gave the college a rating of A2 stable and in January of this year, S&P reaffirmed its A/Stable rating.

While Kenyon enjoys a strong position, the college has not been immune to external pressures facing small liberal arts colleges, namely downward demographic trends, lingering effects of COVID-19, and rising costs and inflation. The construction of two new residence halls, which were mostly donor-funded, could facilitate enrollment growth of about 200 students over the next five years, resulting in improved operating performance.

Fundraising + *Our Path Forward* Campaign

In Fiscal Year 2024, philanthropic commitments received by Kenyon totaled \$70 million, including \$20 million in new attainment. The annual giving program raised \$6.3 million, including \$4.5 million from the Kenyon Fund and \$1.2 million from the Parents Fund. Alumni participation stood at 27 percent. The Office of Advancement employs roughly 40 professionals and has an operating budget of \$1.2 million.

In June 2024, Kenyon concluded the [Our Path Forward](#) campaign as the most successful in the college's history, raising \$532 million, exceeding both the original goal of \$300 million and a revised goal of \$500 million. A total of 22,886 people gave during the eight-year campaign, from students giving \$1 to a record anonymous [\\$100 million gift](#).

Thanks to the combined generosity of 17,947 alumni, parents and friends, the \$300 million goal of the original Our Path Forward campaign was surpassed, five months ahead of schedule. With a record-breaking \$100 million from an anonymous donor to fund the construction of three new apartment-style residence halls on South Campus, Kenyon continued the campaign until 2024. The new \$500 million goal included an additional \$80 million for scholarships and aid as well as \$20 million in continued support for Kenyon's annual funds.

For more information about Kenyon, please see the addendum of this document and visit www.kenyon.edu.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT

The vice president for advancement reports to President Kornfeld and serves as a presidential thought partner and key member of the leadership team that sets the strategic direction of the college. The vice president is responsible for designing and implementing policy and programs that maximize personal engagement and produce increasing levels of support for Kenyon, as well as for management and oversight of the Office of Advancement. This position requires visionary leadership, creativity and innovation, exceptional judgment, strong communication skills, and the ability to work collaboratively with many constituencies, both on and off campus.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Serve as an Executive Thought Partner and Advisor

- Guide and support the president in her role as chief fundraiser, serving as a coach, advisor, and co-strategist in cultivating and soliciting transformational gifts. Similarly guide and support faculty and other leaders in all advancement-related activities. Ensure they are effectively and professionally staffed; provide focus for their efforts so that their time spent is productive, meaningful, and personally rewarding.
- Serve as an active member of the president's executive leadership team. Participate in and contribute to discussions and decision-making that will guide strategies and policies shaping Kenyon's future.
- Cultivate strong working relationships with administrative and academic leadership across the college. Ensure that advancement continues to be seen as a productive, collaborative, transparent, proactive, responsive, and trustworthy partner able to professionally address both opportunities and concerns.
- Analyze the board's giving patterns and encourage their personal participation in philanthropy. Provide the highest level of personal support to the board and volunteer leadership for their activities on behalf of Kenyon; ensure that their intellectual and emotional connection to Kenyon and each other is strengthened. Support to president and board to develop strategies that will enhance and strengthen the board and attract compelling new members with an affinity for Kenyon.

Design the Overarching Strategy for Kenyon Advancement

- Lead a coordinated advancement operation that drives increases in philanthropic revenue year over year. Identify compelling major funding opportunities aligned with the college's strategic priorities and vision, and match them with existing and potential donors. Inspire and challenge the Kenyon community to engage in and commit to its future.
- Craft a sophisticated multi-year fundraising and engagement strategy that ensures sustainable long-term growth in philanthropic contributions, further deepening donor commitments to Kenyon while also working to broaden the base of support at all levels. Utilize clear and compelling communications to all audiences, which will reinforce the College's key priorities and strategic direction.

- Foster an advancement enterprise that incorporates constant assessment and innovation with respect to personnel and programs. Monitor and track new industry trends, explore emerging and modern approaches, and encourage bold data-informed risk-taking across the division, including the developing use of artificial intelligence within fundraising and constituent engagement.
- Partner with the president and other key leaders in developing the foundational strategy that will lead to the planning and implementation of the college's next comprehensive campaign. Develop and lead other strategic fundraising initiatives, such as Third Century Founders.

Personally Cultivate Highest-Level Donors

- Directly manage a select portfolio of high-level prospects and donors. Lead the frontline fundraising staff by example, demonstrating successful cultivation, timely solicitation, and stewardship of key donors in order to maximize philanthropic revenues.

Lead and Empower a Talented and Committed Team

- Promote excellence and an environment of achievement among advancement's 40-person staff by placing staff members' work within the context of Kenyon's mission and strategic priorities. Work with each staff member to set mutually agreed upon, well-defined, and measurable goals. Ensure that individuals have a sense of responsibility and ownership for the successful outcome of the organization.
- Foster a work environment that recognizes and rewards performance and innovation, supports new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence, encourages interaction and teamwork. Serve as an advocate for staff, representing their needs and concerns.
- Oversee all personnel activities for the office, including the recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of staff, ensuring sound processes around professional development opportunities performance.

Oversee a Robust Advancement Operations Enterprise

- Develop efficient and effective programs designed to leverage the annual fund as a pipeline for major, planned, and principal giving prospects; ensure that accurate and timely alumni and parent data is captured.
- Assess donor stewardship and ensure gifts are acknowledged in a comprehensive, timely, and innovative fashion; elevate the importance of stewarding all gifts and programs that strengthen donors' interests in, satisfaction with, and commitment to Kenyon.
- Ensure that the college draws upon the skills and talent of its alumni. Convey to volunteers that their service is valued and their support is appreciated. Create programming and engagement opportunities for Kenyon's 23,000 living alumni that enhance and support the college's vision and ambitions.

- Ensure that all systems and processes, from data capture in Slate for Advancement to gift acceptances and processing, maximize available intelligence via reporting and follow sound budgetary, legal, and accountability practices.
- Proactively manage all processes associated with the \$1.2 million operating budget, anticipating costs and prioritizing needs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

A minimum of 10 to 15 years of experience in and knowledge of all major functions of development and alumni and constituent relations is required, as well as a familiarity with liberal arts education and an understanding of current issues facing liberal arts colleges.

Additional qualifications and experience include:

- A deep appreciation for liberal arts education, as well as the history, mission, achievements, goals, and distinct location of Kenyon, and the ability to effectively articulate its vision, uniqueness, and relevance.
- Progressively responsible fundraising and managerial experience in advancement, preferably within higher education. Depth of knowledge of best practices in all key areas of advancement; a demonstrated ability to plan, manage, and close a comprehensive campaign.
- Experience building upon a robust existing advancement program, including individual and institutional philanthropy, resulting in a transformative increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization. Success in increasing the effectiveness of an advancement program and its staff through bold innovation coupled with established objectives and performance standards.
- The credibility, maturity, and sound judgement required to effectively engage and leverage Kenyon's leadership and volunteers in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of key prospects and donors.
- A proven track record of success in personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding gifts of six- and seven-figures or more. A high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth individuals and corporate business leaders, domestically and internationally.
- Proven management skills in establishing a team- and goal-oriented environment that empowers staff through active communication and delegation and that builds confidence, promotes diversity of thought, fosters intellectual curiosity, demands kindness and mutual respect, and celebrates achievements. A history of recruiting and developing exceptional people.
- A high level of energy, self-assuredness, optimism, personal resilience, and the ability to function at peak levels in a high expectation environment.
- Ability to translate ideas into action; a calculated risk-taker. Comfortable working with ambiguity.

- Willingness to support and collaborate with Kenyon's communications function as a strong strategic partner.
- Exemplary interpersonal and listening skills; impeccable attention to detail; superb commitment and follow-through; strong personal integrity, emotional intelligence, and work ethic coupled with a humble approach, sense of humor, and perspective. A commitment to the highest standards of professionalism.
- Superior written and oral communication skills; a superb storyteller. Ability to succinctly communicate vision and process to all key constituents, utilizing data and metrics as appropriate.
- A sharp eye for operational efficiency and the best use of resources, including a demonstrated understanding of budgets and the ability to manage them.
- A desire and the intellectual curiosity to deeply engage in the life of Kenyon, its rural campus, and its extended community, and to share in its commitment to inclusive excellence and global engagement.
- The personal flexibility to travel domestically and internationally, and work evenings and weekends as required.
- Bachelor's degree required.

Location: Gambier, OH

The village of Gambier is located right in the middle of Kenyon's campus, and by design. The village includes the community's post office, market, bookstore, coffee shop, and a handful of other shops and restaurants. With a population of 2,450 sprinkled across less than a square mile, Gambier's location off the beaten path is a vital part of Kenyon and shapes the way students, faculty, and staff love and learn.

Gambier, located in Knox County, is nestled on a hilltop bordered by the Kokosing River and surrounded by the gently rolling hills of Ohio countryside. Many professors and staff live in Gambier or neighboring Mt. Vernon and are active members of the community. While Kenyon may sit within a rural, small, wide-open space, campus is only a little over an hour drive to Columbus, Ohio's vibrant capital city.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications including resumes should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team via the link below.

Jack Gorman, Partner
Grace Zakim, Managing Associate
Lisa Clayton, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/kenyon-college/vice-president-advancement>

Kenyon College is an equal opportunity employer and applications from members of all underrepresented groups are encouraged. It is the College's policy to evaluate qualified applicants without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical and/or mental disability, age, religion, medical condition, veteran status, marital status, or any other characteristic protected by institutional policy or state, local, or federal law. Kenyon College has a strong commitment to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion. Please visit our [Diversity at Kenyon](#) website.

ADDENDUM

Students

Kenyon believes that a student population representing diverse geographic, economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds is essential to a liberal arts education. The college's student body of approximately 1,750 hails from 47 U.S. states and 48 countries, and 33% of students identify as domestic students of color or international students.

Faculty and Academics

The Kenyon community is animated by its commitments to liberal arts education and to educating students who go out into the world and change it for the better. The curriculum is both wide and deep, as well as highly interdisciplinary, offering more than 50 majors, minors, and concentrations, plus the option for students to design their own. An education at Kenyon enables graduates to stand out. Kenyon is a top producer of Fulbright Fellows and ranks eighth in the nation for the proportion of STEM graduates to earn a doctorate in their field.

Kenyon is home to more than 200 engaged and dedicated professors who devote their full attention to their students. Kenyon faculty members are also authors, artists, and researchers immersed in scholarly and creative projects. 99% of Kenyon's tenure-track faculty hold a Ph.D. or other terminal degree in their field. Because teaching is prioritized at Kenyon, every class is taught by a member of the faculty. The 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio makes for small, intimate classes, enabling faculty and students to form long-lasting and meaningful relationships. Once required to live in Gambier, many Kenyon faculty still reside just steps away from campus.

Associated Nonprofit Organizations & Businesses

Kenyon supports and is supported by associated nonprofit organizations of local importance and national distinction. Although different in mission, resources, and structure, the *Kenyon Review*, the Philander Chase Conservancy, Kokosing Nature Preserve, and the Gund all augment and enhance the college's mission. These organizations, based on Kenyon's campus, provide students with special opportunities to apply classroom study to real-world problems, build career credentials, and interact with the community. The COO will provide operational and administrative oversight, guidance, and support to these areas.

The Kenyon Review

Founded in 1939, [The Kenyon Review](#) is a nationally prominent quarterly literary magazine that enhances Kenyon's reputation as The Writer's College. It publishes breakthrough work by prize-winning authors and daring new voices. The *Review* has featured the early works of notable writers such as Flannery O'Connor,

Dylan Thomas, Maya Angelou, and Ha Jin. Each summer, the *Review* welcomes adult and high school students to campus for various programs, including its prestigious Young Writers workshop.

The Philander Chase Corporation & Kokosing Nature Preserve

The [Philander Chase Corporation](#) conserves open space and important natural habitats in a five-mile radius surrounding Kenyon. The conservancy works with farmers, landowners, environmental groups and government agencies to ensure the rural character of the surrounding area is maintained. Kenyon formed the Conservancy in 2000 in anticipation of a greater need to protect the farmland and rural nature of the surrounding area and is the only college or university in the country to establish its own land trust. In over two decades of conservation, 5,600 acres and 66 farms and properties have been preserved and more than 5 miles of the Kokosing River are protected by easements. A project of the Philander Chase Conservancy, the [Kokosing Nature Preserve](#) is a conservation burial ground located in Gambier that offers a natural burial option on 23 acres of restored prairies and woodlands.

The Gund

Kenyon's teaching art museum and visual arts center, [The Gund](#) began in 2011 as a place to experience modern and contemporary art and over the last 14 years has expanded its vision to include programming that extends far beyond a traditional gallery space. The Gund is home to a growing collection of more than 450 modern and contemporary works and the building is an architectural destination itself. Named for Graham Gund '63, a celebrated architect, art collector, and philanthropist, the building is a 31,000 square-foot LEED-certified building.