



Assistant Vice President for Development

Pomona College
Claremont, California

THE SEARCH

Pomona College (Pomona) seeks an action-oriented, strategic, and collaborative fundraising leader to serve as the assistant vice president for development (AVP). Reporting to the vice president for advancement (VP) and serving as an integral member and key executive leader of the advancement senior leadership team, the AVP will contribute to and implement a shared vision and strategy for a significant division of Pomona's advancement enterprise – including major gifts, parent and family giving, leadership annual and reunion giving, and foundation and corporate relations – leading to increased philanthropic support from key constituents and advancing the mission and impact of Pomona, one of the most highly regarded and selective liberal arts colleges in the world.

This is an exceptional opportunity at a pivotal moment in Pomona's history, as the college has generated strong momentum in the quiet phase of an ambitious comprehensive campaign to advance the bold institutional priorities outlined in the *Strategic Vision for Pomona College*. Since the arrival in 2020 of Pomona's Vice President for Advancement, Maria Watson, the advancement operation has experienced exceptional growth and transformation as it seeks to build a best-in-class advancement enterprise through strategic reorganization and significant investment in staff and programs. In partnership with the VP and advancement senior leadership team, the AVP will contribute to strengthening systems, processes, and policies to support enhanced performance and productivity across the division. This individual will mobilize and expertly lead a team of 23, empowering managers through strategic problem-solving, information sharing, and the use of data to track progress and outcomes. An exceptional communicator and relationship builder, the AVP will inspire trust to establish and deepen critical relationships with the vice president for academic affairs and dean of the college, as well as other senior academic and administrative leaders across campus. In addition to personally managing a portfolio of high-level major and principal gift prospects and donors, the AVP will implement the necessary strategy to expand the college's donor base and strengthen the case for support to attract major and principal gifts from both existing and new benefactors. The AVP, in consultation with the VP, will advise and support the board of trustees' advancement committee and the college's senior leadership in launching development

initiatives and achieving fundraising goals associated with the upcoming comprehensive campaign and beyond, ensuring the ongoing success and sustained elevation of Pomona's advancement enterprise.

Critical to success will be the AVP's ability to articulate a genuine and compelling commitment to the goals of a liberal arts education and the mission and vision of Pomona College. The ideal candidate must possess at least ten years of progressive fundraising leadership experience, including a minimum of five years of direct supervisory experience, preferably in an academic setting and campaign environment. With a keen understanding of fundraising best practices, the AVP will have a proven track record of program building and fundraising success in securing major and principal gift commitments from individuals, corporations, and foundations. The successful candidate will possess the ability to act with initiative, integrity, and self-assuredness; an openness to learning and improving through feedback and guidance; and a growth mindset, coupled with the drive to personally strive and inspire others to achieve ambitious results. The AVP will be adept at motivating, empowering, and advocating for staff, as well as facilitating cohesion and team success. The AVP must be a responsive and collaborative team player, a strong relationship-builder, as well as demonstrate the credibility, maturity, and sophistication necessary to effectively engage with senior leaders and diverse groups of internal and external constituents.

Pomona College has retained Rachel Ellenport of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Essential Functions

Reporting to the vice president for advancement, the assistant vice president for development will work independently and collaboratively to perform the following essential duties and responsibilities.

Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Lead and supervise the advancement development staff in major gifts, parent and family giving, corporate and foundation relations, and leadership annual and reunion giving to expand Pomona's donor base, both geographically and beyond traditional pools of support, increase financial commitments in all fundraising programs, and achieve overall fundraising success and priorities for the college.
- Provide leadership for the ongoing execution of Pomona's annual fundraising goals and upcoming comprehensive campaign. Clearly articulate the college's philanthropic priorities internally and externally; and work closely with the president, dean, vice president for advancement, executive staff, and advancement senior leadership to develop strategies, approaches, and programs to ensure the success of the campaign and alignment of academic initiatives and priorities with the college's fundraising strategies.

- Develop and employ strategies to increase gift revenue, maintain and strengthen relationships with key volunteers, enhance engagement, and ensure that resources and tools are robust and effective. Lead efforts to identify and cultivate new donors and volunteers.
- Design and implement performance metrics, assessment tools, and annual goals for the development team and individual fundraisers based on best practices and accountability; devise strong data-informed methods for decision-making and the timely evaluation of program performance and forecasting.
- Foster a culture of personal accountability, innovation, creativity, and growth in philanthropy in a highly engaged intellectual community, including among Pomona's board of trustees.

Engagement with Key Partners

- Advise and collaborate with the vice president for advancement, campaign director, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the college, and other senior academic and administrative leaders to help establish strategic direction for the college's advancement efforts, develop comprehensive annual plans, set aspirational goals.
- Collaborate with senior campus leaders to understand, interpret, and fund the college's academic and campaign priorities, as well as inspire full engagement and effective participation of volunteer councils, boards, alumni, and support groups.
- Collaborate with colleagues across Pomona to identify and explore ways to enhance individual and institutional giving efforts for the college, including formulating creative cultivation plans, successful solicitation strategies, and effective stewardship efforts to maximize the lifetime engagement and support of the college's alumni and friends.
- Proactively work to understand and maintain an in-depth knowledge of Pomona's programs, key faculty, research, notable alumni, and student initiatives; serve as a resource, advocate, and spokesperson for the Pomona advancement office and programs.

Team Management and Oversight

- Manage the divisions of major giving, parent and family giving, foundation and corporate relations, and leadership annual and reunion giving staff, as well as administrative assistants.
- Set clear vision and direction for a staff of 23 fundraising professionals, including four direct reports, and administrative support personnel. Develop a strong sense of teamwork, and an environment of mentoring and support.
- Devise and implement strategies to provide professional development for staff and encourage their highest level of performance. Work with each staff member to set mutually agreed upon, well-defined, and measurable goals.
- Promote excellence and an environment of achievement by placing staff members' work within the context of Pomona's mission and strategic priorities.
- Ensure that individuals have a sense of responsibility and ownership for the successful outcome of the college's advancement enterprise.

- Maintain a leadership style that is open and fluid, and capable of inspiring, empowering, and motivating staff.
- Oversee all personnel activities for the office, including the recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of staff; as well as defining the job responsibilities and performance review process for each staff member.
- Foster a work environment that recognizes and rewards performance, supports new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence, encourages interaction and teamwork, and promotes diversity.
- Serve as an advocate for staff, representing their needs and concerns.

Fundraising

- Personally identify, qualify, cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of high-level principal and major gift prospects, setting an example of frontline fundraising success for the development team.
- Forge relationships with a diverse population that will lead to transformational gifts.
- Oversee the preparation of funding proposals, talking points and strategies, assessments of potential support, briefings for senior officers and trustees, and stewardship reports for all assigned prospects.
- Rely on past experience in the field and remain current with evolving trends in philanthropy.

Qualifications and Characteristics

Education: Bachelor's degree in communications, marketing, journalism, business administration, a liberal arts field, or equivalent combination of education and experience is required. A master's degree in marketing, fundraising, or business or a related field is preferred.

Experience: The ideal candidate will have a minimum of ten years of fundraising leadership experience, including at least five years of supervisory experience. The candidate must have a record of successfully soliciting and closing major gifts. Experience in an academic setting is strongly preferred, as is working in a campaign environment.

Required Knowledge and Critical Skills: The AVP must possess the knowledge, skills, and ability to successfully perform the essential functions of the job or must be able to demonstrate how the essential functions will be performed through knowledge, skills, and abilities not listed below.

- A growth mindset, coachability, and humility with an openness to learning from others and being receptive to constructive criticism.
- High level of emotional intelligence demonstrating self-awareness, measured decision-making, and reality testing. Demonstrated proponent of accountability, fostering an environment of learning from problems and engineering sustainable solutions.

- Leadership courage and the ability to act with confidence and integrity in the face of uncertainty, risk, or adversity. The willingness to take calculated risks and make difficult decisions, even when they may be unpopular or controversial. The ability to learn from failures and move forward.
- Expert depth of knowledge of best practices in all key areas of advancement. Thorough knowledge of all phases of fundraising, including principal gifts, constituency-based fundraising, major gifts, parent and family, dynamic annual programs, including reunions and class based, corporate and foundation relations, regional, and international fundraising programs. Success in increasing the effectiveness of an advancement program and its staff through established objectives and performance standards.
- Significant experience leading a comprehensive and large-scale campaign in a higher education setting.
- A proven track record of success in personally qualifying, cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major and principal gifts (\$1 million and above) from individuals, foundations, and corporations.
- A high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth individuals and corporate business leaders, domestically and internationally.
- Excellent management skills; the ability to set objectives and performance standards, provide constructive feedback, and achieve established program goals. Must have a history of recruiting and developing talented professionals.
- Ability to work effectively in a complex institutional setting and develop and sustain productive and effective relationships with donors, faculty, colleagues, and departmental senior management.
- Demonstrated ability to build bridges and forge critical relationships with faculty, staff, and senior leaders across an institution.
- Intellectual curiosity and commitment to the goals of a liberal arts education are essential, as is the ability to articulate the case for support.
- A high level of energy, self-confidence, optimism, personal resilience, and the ability to function at peak levels in a high-expectation environment.
- Exemplary interpersonal and listening skills; impeccable attention to detail; superb commitment and follow-through; strong personal integrity, charisma, 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; clarity, crispness, and elegance in writing and speaking. Ability to succinctly communicate a clear vision and process, utilizing data and metrics as appropriate.
- Ability to communicate effectively with and harness energies from a broad base of constituents, including trustees, faculty, staff, public officials, business executives, students, alumni, and parents, each representing varied cultural, social, political, and economic backgrounds.
- Ability to handle all activities and highly confidential information with patience, discretion, good judgment, courtesy, and tact.

- Exceptional organizational and time management skills to complete work with accuracy and a keen attention to detail.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The annual salary for this role is between \$200,000-\$225,000, with a competitive benefits package. The specific factors that Pomona College will consider when offering a salary to an individual will include, but not be limited to, education, training, relevant prior experience, and performance in prior roles.

Pomona College is located in the city of Claremont, California, 35 miles east of Los Angeles. The city, with a population of more than 36,000, features sidewalk cafes, specialty shops, tree-lined streets, and bungalow homes. Claremont was recently ranked the 5th most-desirable town in the nation, and housing prices are more affordable than many areas in Southern California. With stunning views of the San Gabriel Mountains, Claremont is less than an hour away from downtown Los Angeles and from mountains, desert, and beaches.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/pomona-college/assistant-vice-president-development>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Rachel Ellenport is leading this search with Nicole Poe, Bryce Ervin, and Rebecca Lyons.
Isaacson, Miller

Pomona College prides itself in being an open, competitive, and equal opportunity employer.

ADDENDUM

About Pomona College

Pomona College was incorporated in October 1887, by a group of Congregationalists who wanted to recreate “a college of the New England type” on the West Coast. Instruction began the next year in a small, rented house in the city of Pomona. By the 1920s, Pomona President James A. Blaisdell faced a difficult choice—to limit expansion to retain the college’s unique character or allow growth and expand into a university. Under Blaisdell’s guidance, the college chose a third path. Using Oxford and Cambridge as models, Pomona founded a consortium unlike any other in America.

Over the next 75 years, two graduate schools and four other undergraduate colleges joined Pomona as members of The Claremont Colleges, located on neighboring campuses, allowing cross-registration in the nearly 2,700 courses taught across the consortium, and sharing important facilities such as libraries. As such, Pomona offers both the advantages of a small liberal arts college and the resources of a university.

Today, Pomona enjoys a reputation as one of the most highly regarded and selective liberal arts colleges in the world. It also stands with a small number of institutions willing and able to admit students based entirely on academic achievement and promise without regard to ability to pay, and then to meet all demonstrated financial need of domestic students with no loans. Sixty-seven percent of students receive financial aid. Because of this institutional commitment, Pomona attracts some of the most highly qualified students in the country. Through an academically challenging curriculum, outstanding faculty, extraordinary students, and intimate size, Pomona provides an unparalleled environment for intellectual development and personal growth.

Pomona is a close-knit and diverse community of accomplished scholars, scientists, entrepreneurs, and artists who are passionate about making a difference in the world. Pomona provides excellence in undergraduate instruction across 48 majors in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. There are approximately 1,747 students from 61 nations and 49 U.S. states, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Over 50 percent of Pomona students self-identify as members of BIPOC communities, and 13.3 percent of the class of 2025 are first-generation students. Almost all students live in one of 14 residence halls on the 140-acre campus.

With a student-faculty ratio of 8 to 1 and an average class size of 15, students work closely with their professors in the classroom, in the lab, and in the field. Pomona offers about 650 courses taught by 198 faculty members, all with terminal degrees. Its location—within an hour of Los Angeles and the mountains, desert, and beaches—provides countless opportunities for field study, research, and internships. About 53 percent of students participate in research with faculty, including more than 200 students who enroll in summer research programs.

Pomona has one of the biggest networks in liberal arts education with alumni working in a wide variety of career fields, from business, law, and medicine to non-profit, education, and science to politics, art, and entertainment. Pomona's 25,000 living alumni are dispersed across all 50 states and 74 countries.

Financial and Advancement Overview

As of June 30, 2024, Pomona's endowment was valued at nearly \$3.0 billion. Historically, endowment distributions funded 49 percent of the college's operating expenses. Although the endowment is large relative to peers, growing the endowment is a necessity given Pomona College's entirely need-blind admission policy in conjunction with its commitment to meet all demonstrated financial need for all domestic students without any loans. Pomona College's total operating budget was over \$214 million for FY 2024 on a net tuition basis.

Pomona College's most recent comprehensive Campaign Pomona: Daring Minds concluded in 2015 with more than \$316 million raised from 28,124 donors. Funding priorities included capital improvements, unrestricted giving, financial aid, and faculty and programmatic support, both outright and endowed.

In FY 2024, total fundraising revenue was \$57 million, with approximately \$5.2 million given to the annual fund, \$10.3 million to major gifts, and \$14.4 million to the Pomona Plan, the first annuity and life income program in the country. For decades, the Pomona Plan has been a steady source of revenue for the college.

LEADERSHIP

Maria Watson

Vice President for Advancement

Maria Watson joined Pomona College in 2020 as Vice President for Advancement. As an Executive Officer of the College and reporting directly to the President, Watson oversees Pomona's development, principal and major gifts, gift planning, alumni and family engagement, advancement services, and advancement communications and office of college events teams. The team of nearly 90 staff raises over \$50 million per year and is currently leading the most ambitious campaign in Pomona's history to support the mission of one of the leading liberal arts colleges in the country.

Watson was previously Associate Vice President for Development at the University of Southern California (USC), where she set strategic direction for major gift, regional, and school/unit fundraising initiatives to realize the university's historic \$7.2 billion campaign, "Fas Regna Trojae." She was promoted to AVP of Development in 2014 after her successful tenure building philanthropic support for the university throughout the Northeast as the inaugural director of USC's New York Advancement office since 2011.

Watson brings 25 years of experience in the non-profit sector in fundraising, marketing, and public relations. Prior to the University of Southern California, she served as the Chief Development Officer for

WFUV Public Radio, Fordham University in New York. During the course of her career, Watson has also held a number of senior positions in management, marketing, and fundraising in performing arts organizations, including Lincoln Center, New World Symphony, and Brooklyn Philharmonic. She spent seven years in marketing, ultimately as Director of Marketing and Communications for The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Her career began with the National Endowment for the Arts and Congressional Arts Caucus in Washington, DC.

A native New Yorker, Watson earned a bachelor of musical arts degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on merit scholarship and a master of business administration from the University of Southern California. She and her husband David live in Claremont. An avid motorcyclist, she is a proud Ducatista on the street and track and has taken up the futile pursuit of speeding on a racetrack.