

Knight-Hennessy Scholars Stanford University

Director of Admission, Knight-Hennessy Scholars
Stanford University
Stanford, California

THE SEARCH

Knight-Hennessy Scholars at Stanford University seeks a collaborative and strategic leader and problem-solver to serve as its Director of Admission. A key member of the leadership team, the Director of Admission will have the opportunity to attract, recruit, select, and enroll an extraordinary cohort of graduate students across the University who engage in experiences that prepare them to be visionary, courageous, and collaborative leaders to address the world's most complex challenges.

Leadership in the modern world requires multicultural and multidisciplinary understanding. The most important problems that the world faces are often global and usually require experts across multiple disciplines to make meaningful progress. To address this systemic issue, President Emeritus John Hennessy and Nike co-founder Phil Knight founded Knight-Hennessy Scholars in 2016, the world's largest fully endowed scholarship program for graduate education. The program brings together scholars from around the world and from many disciplines to create a learning environment that will help prepare all scholars for leadership in a highly diverse and complex world. Each Knight-Hennessy scholar receives up to three years of financial support to pursue graduate studies at Stanford while engaging in experiences that prepare scholars to be leaders in business, law, medicine, government, nonprofits, industry, and the community at large. The program's offerings seek to strengthen values, build skills, develop knowledge, and create a community that will lead to lifelong relationships with a network of global leaders. Today, over 500 scholars are a part of this prestigious community.

The Director of Admission will join a highly entrepreneurial and collaborative team to continue to develop, implement, and oversee a strategic admissions process that embodies the mission and value of Knight-Hennessy Scholars. Reporting to the Executive Director, they will lead the admissions team in their pursuit of a comprehensive and nuanced admissions process that attracts high-quality emerging leaders, with the goal of enrolling up to 100 scholars annually from across Stanford's degree programs. The Director will have the opportunity to engage with varied constituencies around the world and cultivate relationships across the university ecosystem to maintain the partnerships and cooperation required to enroll the strongest cohort possible. A key member of the leadership team, the Director of Admission will exhibit intellectual curiosity, solid judgment, an innovative spirit, technical expertise, and a commitment to

managing complex projects in a fast-paced, start-up-like environment. To be successful in this role, the Director of Admission will address the following opportunities and challenges:

- Provide critical leadership in assessing, refining, and implementing an overarching and impactful admission strategy for long-term success
- Thoughtfully represent Knight-Hennessy Scholars within Stanford University and around the world
- Work in close collaboration with the Knight-Hennessy Scholars leadership team to achieve programmatic goals, including continuing to integrate admissions and marketing efforts
- Manage and empower a talented admissions team

Knight-Hennessy Scholars has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the parties at the end of this document.

ABOUT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1885, Stanford is one of the world's premiere institutions of higher education. From the beginning, Stanford stood apart from the broader higher education landscape: coeducational in a time when most private universities were all-male; nondenominational when most were associated with a religious organization; and practical, producing cultured and useful citizens. The institution has been defined by its willingness to experiment beyond known limits and has thus achieved some of the most iconic advancements in technology, medicine, business, the arts, humanities, and the social sciences of the 20th and 21st centuries. With its close ties to Silicon Valley, the future is arguably invented at Stanford. As of Fall 2024, the University has over 17,000 students who come from all 50 states and 75 countries—representing a diverse, global, and dynamic student community—as well as over 2,300 faculty who are leaders in their fields.

Imagine a world without search engines or social platforms. Consider lives saved through first-ever organ transplants and research to cure illnesses. Stanford University has revolutionized the way we live and enriches the world. Supporting this mission is a diverse and dedicated staff of over 17,000, driven to impact the future of our legacy. The institution's culture and unique perks empower staff with the freedom to grow, a caring culture, health benefits, and other enviable resources.

ABOUT KNIGHT-HENNESSY SCHOLARS

[Knight-Hennessy Scholars](#) was founded in 2016 by John Hennessy, who served as Stanford University's 10th president from 2000 to 2016 and Phil Knight, MBA '62, philanthropist, American businessman, and co-founder of Nike Inc. President Emeritus Hennessy and Mr. Knight recognized an opportunity for greater leadership across a variety of sectors in society. Generous benefactors, including Mr. Knight, provided founding gifts totaling more than \$750 million, which makes Knight-Hennessy Scholars the largest fully-endowed, university-wide graduate fellowship in the world.

For nearly a decade, Knight-Hennessy Scholars has cultivated a diverse multidisciplinary community of emerging leaders from around the world and guided them to collaborate, innovate, and communicate as they prepare to address the complex challenges facing society. All scholars are Stanford University graduate students who join Knight-Hennessy Scholars and enroll in a graduate degree program at any of [Stanford's seven schools](#). The Knight-Hennessy model is built upon three crucial pillars:

1. [Leadership Development](#): Knight-Hennessy Scholars develops emerging leaders who have a strong multidisciplinary and multicultural perspective, a commitment to the greater good, and the tools needed to drive meaningful change. Within Knight-Hennessy Scholars, the King Global Leadership Program (KGLP) provides a collection of community experiences, workshops, domestic and global study trips, and personal development opportunities centered around quarterly themes. Highlights include KHeystone Projects (scholar-led collaborations aimed at addressing important regional or global issues) and special opportunities to engage with notable guest speakers.
2. [Community](#): Scholars are addressing challenges and opportunities in their academic work that often require bridging disciplines, cultures, and areas of expertise. As such, scholars come from all over the world and represent a vast array of cultures and perspectives. Upon arrival on campus, scholars learn together and build deep relationships that foster meaningful connections and lifelong friendships.
3. [Funding](#): Knight-Hennessy scholars receive funding for up to three years for any graduate degree(s) at Stanford. Scholars receive various types of funding, including a fellowship to cover tuition, a stipend for living and academic expenses, and a travel stipend for an annual trip to and from Stanford.

Since its founding, there have been 513 Knight-Hennessy scholars. These students represent 107 Stanford degree programs, 75 countries of citizenship, and 174 undergraduate institutions, including 62 international institutions and 112 domestic institutions. 51% (of U.S. citizens/residents) identify as a person of color, 45% hold a non-U.S. passport, 17% are first-generation college graduates, and 9% are U.S. military service members or veterans.

The benefits of being a Knight-Hennessy scholar continue long after graduation. Knight-Hennessy alumni from across disciplines and cultures support one another as they address important issues facing our planet. Alumni attend events and reunions, mentor current scholars, serve as guest speakers and ambassadors, and ultimately develop future generations of scholars. As the number of Knight-Hennessy scholars grows over time and each cohort matures professionally, the collective contributions of the alumni expand and positively impact our world. In 50 years, there will be 5,000 Knight-Hennessy scholars at various stages of their careers, driving positive change that transcends disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

Knight-Hennessy Scholars Admissions

All Knight-Hennessy scholars apply and are selected for admission. Each incoming Knight-Hennessy scholar must also apply to, be accepted by, and enroll in a full-time Stanford graduate degree program(s). Knight-Hennessy Scholars and the Stanford degree program(s) evaluate applications concurrently but separately; applications are reviewed by separate admission committees that make independent assessments. While Knight-Hennessy Scholars does not review Stanford degree program application(s), the program checks in at regular intervals with Stanford degree programs to verify which Knight-Hennessy applicants have submitted their degree program application and remain competitive for admission. Of approximately 8,500 applications, up to 500 are invited to submit a required video introduction; from that group, up to 180 are invited to participate in an on-campus Finalist Experience.

For Knight-Hennessy, there are no restrictions based on citizenship, age, college or university, field of study, or career aspiration. In the evaluation and selection of scholars, Knight-Hennessy looks for evidence of three criteria:

1. Independence of thought: Knight-Hennessy scholars are visionary thinkers who are curious, open-minded, analytical, eager for cross-cultural perspective, and genuinely excited to boldly and creatively address our world's important challenges
2. Purposeful leadership: Knight-Hennessy scholars are courageous leaders who are ethical, decisive, resilient, driven to achieve meaningful results, and motivated to inspire others to effect positive change at scale.
3. Civic mindset: Knight-Hennessy scholars are collaborative community members who are humble, empathetic, trustworthy, oriented to act in service of others, and deeply passionate about contributing to the greater good.

Knight-Hennessy Scholars Team

President Emeritus Hennessy is the visionary behind Knight-Hennessy Scholars and continues to serve as the program's inaugural Shriram Family Director. As Stanford University's 10th president, John L. Hennessy led the university's extraordinary growth in multidisciplinary research and teaching from 2000 to 2016. Keeping Stanford accessible and affordable to outstanding students was among his priorities, and during his presidency, Stanford's financial aid program became one of the strongest in the nation.

The Knight-Hennessy Scholars [team](#) is entrepreneurial, driven by collaboration and guided by unique perspectives and ideas. Dr. Tina Seelig is Executive Director of Knight-Hennessy Scholars and is also Director Emerita of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, where she served as executive director, faculty director, and professor of the practice in the Department of Management Science and Engineering (MS&E). She has taught courses on leadership, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship in MS&E and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (d.school) at Stanford.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION

Reporting to the Knight-Hennessy Scholars Executive Director and serving as a key member of the leadership team, the Director of Admission will be a strategic thinker, excellent project manager, creative problem-solver, conscientious colleague, and an enthusiastic team player with a depth of knowledge in assessment, student experience, and team management. The Director of Admission is responsible for the development, implementation, and continual assessment of the policies and practices surrounding the selection of Knight-Hennessy scholars. This includes oversight of the evaluation and selection process, marketing goals, and strategic outreach. The Director of Admission will build on existing relationships and collaborate closely with colleagues across Stanford's graduate programs. In doing this important work, the Director of Admission should evince a passion for graduate education and leadership development within a leading research university and relish engaging with various constituencies around the world in the recruitment of high-quality emerging leaders.

The Director of Admission will supervise a team of six, and partner closely with the marketing team. They are responsible for managing an admissions operations budget and ensuring adherence to program goals and compliance with university policies (legal, financial, university, academic, administrative, and external regulations). Domestic and international travel is required.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION

The Director of Admission will build upon a solid foundation rooted in integrity and aligned with programmatic goals and priorities. In doing so, they will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Provide critical leadership in assessing, refining, and implementing an overarching and impactful admission strategy for long-term success

A successful admission process is essential to Knight-Hennessy Scholars, and this role is key to the long-term success of the admission process. To achieve both short and long-term goals, the Director of Admission will bring a strategic mindset to outreach, evaluation, selection, and yield efforts to align with the broader programmatic mission and values. In doing so, they will serve as a highly effective spokesperson for Knight-Hennessy Scholars and Stanford University nationally and globally to increase the number of highly qualified applicants. This outreach includes, but is not limited to, designing and leading online, off-campus, and on-campus information sessions and being strategic around where the admissions team travels. The Director of Admission will be a skilled communicator and presenter with the ability to engage deeply with individuals representing all aspects of the admissions pipeline. This will include providing highly collaborative and thoughtful leadership when interacting with the various graduate program directors across campus.

Additionally, as the point person in the scholar evaluation process, the Director will oversee the reading process and engage in consultative application reviews with other team members, collaboratively

rendering decisions. In leading these different aspects of the admissions cycle, the Director of Admission should be comfortable working independently and proficient in experimentation and making decisions regarding projects, programs, and initiatives. They will serve as a strategic advisor to the Executive Director, providing critical leadership in an ever-changing admissions landscape through problem-solving and highly developed interpersonal skills. They will bring a strategic mindset, an eye for detail, and the ability to leverage data analytics and technology to bolster the existing operation, as well as a high level of integrity as it relates to admissions practice and standards.

Thoughtfully represent Knight-Hennessy Scholars within Stanford University and around the world

Given the concurrent admissions processes between Knight-Hennessy Scholars and the multitude of departments within the Stanford graduate community, the Director of Admission must collaborate and work closely with colleagues across the university to attract and yield top applicants. Building off the program's strong reputation, the Director of Admission will deepen existing relationships and facilitate new collaborations across the university ecosystem. Key partners in this work include department administrators, graduate student advisors, and faculty. Through close collaboration, the Director will ensure the program attracts the best and the brightest from around the world and scholars choose to attend Stanford amongst the impressive competition.

Work in close collaboration with the leadership team to achieve programmatic goals, including continuing to integrate admissions and marketing efforts

The Director of Admission will be a highly effective team player, collaborating closely with a close-knit leadership team to achieve admissions and programmatic goals. They will work in conjunction with the Director to define and revise the criteria for scholar selection annually and, together, determine effective recruitment, yield, and onboarding activities for scholars. This will involve working closely with the marketing team to support recruitment and outreach efforts, events, and the announcement of the new cohort annually. The Director will effectively partner with the marketing team to best leverage their expertise while collaboratively establishing clear, measurable goals for outreach that are informed by their knowledge of current marketing strategies and techniques to achieve strategic recruitment goals. The leadership team prides itself on valuing intense periods of reflection for continued creativity and excellence. Close working relationships across the leadership team will be essential for the success of the admissions cycle and for cultivating the scholar community.

Manage and empower a talented admissions team

The Director of Admission will be a superb manager and provide coaching and mentoring to colleagues; this includes managing performance, providing various professional development opportunities, determining staffing needs, and developing and ensuring succession planning within the admissions team. A creative problem-solver, the Director of Admission should be appropriately nimble in the management of their team, framing problems as opportunities, encouraging innovation, and crafting responsibilities

that harness the strengths, expertise, and interests of the team. The Director will continually monitor the effectiveness of their strategies, pivoting where needed while also encouraging experimentation.

Unlike many traditional admissions processes where interactions conclude at the end of an enrollment cycle, the Knight-Hennessy Scholars staff are housed in the same building and participate in events and programming for the scholar community. As such, the Director of Admission will have the opportunity to get to know the tremendous group of scholars they were responsible for evaluating as prospects while also cultivating them to be good ambassadors for the program.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The following qualifications represent the broad set of skills and personal qualities deemed important for success as the Director of Admission. While no candidate will embody every quality, ideal candidates will bring many of the following professional qualities and attributes:

- Bachelor's degree and ten years of relevant experience, or a combination of education and relevant experience, specifically highly selective admissions processes. An advanced degree is preferred;
- Experience leading and managing a team;
- Demonstrated ability to handle highly confidential and sensitive information with good judgment;
- Ability to establish working relationships across the university;
- Advanced communication (oral and written) and presentation skills to convey information to diverse audiences;
- Adaptability to new information, changing conditions, or revised priorities;
- Ability to collaborate with peers and lead cross-functional groups toward a shared goal;
- Comfort with and proficiency in data analysis. Highly detail-oriented and analytical;
- A deep intellectual curiosity, solid judgment, an innovative spirit, technical expertise, and a commitment to managing both complex and simple projects simultaneously in a fast-paced, start-up-like environment.

COMPENSATION

The expected pay range for this position is \$176,583 to \$220,000 per annum. Stanford University provides pay ranges representing its good faith estimate of what the university reasonably expects to pay for a position. The pay offered to a selected candidate will be determined based on factors such as (but not limited to) the scope and responsibilities of the position, the qualifications of the selected candidate, departmental budget availability, internal equity, geographic location, and external market pay for comparable jobs.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Applications, inquiries, nominations, and referrals should be directed to the Isaacson, Miller web page for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/stanford-university/director-admission-knight-hennessy-scholars>.

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Isaacson, Miller

Stanford is an equal employment opportunity and affirmative action employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.