



Search for the Principal Gift Officer
ETH Zurich Foundation
Zurich, Switzerland

THE SEARCH

ETH Zurich Foundation, the advancement organization supporting [ETH Zurich](#), one of the world's most prestigious universities for science and technology, seeks a vision-driven and relationship-oriented fundraising professional to serve as the inaugural principal gift officer based in the United States. This critical role offers an extraordinary opportunity to build lasting relationships with donors throughout the U.S. who share a passion for scientific discovery, academic excellence, and global impact. As an ambassador for one of the world's leading science and technology universities, the principal gift officer will work closely with philanthropists, leaders of private foundations, and alumni to catalyze transformative gifts that empower students, researchers, and groundbreaking initiatives at ETH Zurich.

In this inaugural role, the principal gift officer will be instrumental in building a transatlantic bridge of innovation, talent, and generosity. Helmed by the leadership of the principal gift officer, United States-based philanthropy has the potential to unlock world-changing research and open doors for the next generation of global changemakers at ETH Zurich. The principal gift officer will develop and expand the pool and pipeline of high-value philanthropic partners and prospects in the U.S., including high net-worth individuals, private foundations, alumni, and corporate partners. Serving as a vital bridge between the ETH Foundation in Switzerland and the institution's philanthropic community in the U.S., the principal gift officer will proactively identify, qualify, cultivate, solicit, and steward long-term relationships with prospective and existing donors. They will develop and manage a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects and alumni in the U.S. This position will be established at the ETH Zurich Foundation (USA), Inc., a 501c3 public charity supporting ETH Zurich. Services, including prospect management, scientific writing, and strategic guidance, are provided out of Zurich, Switzerland.

The successful candidate will be an experienced major and principal gifts fundraiser with a track record of securing seven-figure gifts and beyond. The principal gift officer will possess a keen understanding of best practices in fundraising and will be a skilled relationship builder, storyteller, and listener who thrives on connecting people with purpose. The successful candidate must be familiar with the United States philanthropic landscape and be comfortable working autonomously in a transatlantic context and across the United States. The ideal candidate will be motivated by mission-driven work with a genuine passion for science, education, and innovation, and is excited to represent a university that is shaping the global future. A university degree is required.

ETH Zurich Foundation has retained Jack Gorman of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this important recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ETH ZURICH

Founded in 1855, ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) stands globally among the top universities. ETH Zurich was ranked best university in continental Europe and 7th worldwide in the QS World University Rankings 2025. Located in the heart of Europe, ETH Zurich is where ideas turn into solutions, and theory meets application. From Nobel laureates to pioneering startups, the university's legacy of excellence drives innovation across fields as diverse as quantum computing, climate science, and architecture.

ETH Zurich's 530 professors and 25,000 students from more than 120 countries generate innovative research embracing a broad spectrum of disciplines, including the natural sciences, engineering, architecture, nano and data sciences, robotics, mathematics, and cutting-edge medical technologies. With 16 departments, education at ETH Zurich combines solid theory with practical application, with the mission of enabling students to solve the problems of an unpredictable future while cultivating resilience and adaptability.

At ETH Zurich, students discover an ideal environment for independent thinking, and researchers experience a climate that inspires top performance. Situated in the heart of Europe yet forging connections all over the world, ETH Zurich is pioneering effective solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow.

ETH ZURICH FOUNDATION

ETH Zurich Foundation, the advancement organization supporting ETH Zurich, mobilizes private support to propel academic ambition into real-world impact. Working hand-in-hand with individuals, foundations, and corporate partners, the ETH Zurich Foundation raises funds to support talented students, visionary faculty, and cutting-edge research ideas that address the grand challenges of our time.

To expand its activities globally and facilitate cross-border giving, the ETH Zurich Foundation also maintains two sister organizations abroad, in Germany and in the United States. The principal gift officer will expand efforts in the U.S. to drive philanthropic income for ETH Zurich.

PRINCIPAL GIFT OFFICER

Reporting to the head of international partnerships and to the managing director, the principal gift officer is an inaugural position based in the United States and will be instrumental in deepening and expanding the pool of high-value philanthropic partners in the U.S.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop and manage a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects and alumni across the U.S., building deep and meaningful relationships that lead to significant philanthropic support.
- Proactively identify, cultivate, and steward long-term relationships with prospective and existing donors based in the U.S.
- Serve as a vital bridge between the ETH Foundation in Switzerland and ETH Zurich's philanthropic community in the U.S., fostering collaboration, trust, and long-term engagement.
- Serve on the management of ETH Zurich Foundation (USA), Inc., a public charity that supports the mission of ETH Zurich, together with a passionate and results-driven team.
- Conduct rigorous market and prospect research to identify new major-gift opportunities.
- Manage complex internal and external constituent networks across ETH Zurich faculties, senior leadership, and the Foundation Board to align funding priorities.
- Steer donor-centric proposals and partnership concepts that translate frontier science into investable impact.
- Represent ETH Zurich Foundation at high-level meetings and events in key U.S. philanthropic hubs.
- Maintain meticulous CRM records and contribute to accurate pipeline forecasting and predictive modelling of donor behavior.

Skills and Qualifications

- An experienced major gift fundraiser with a successful track record of securing seven-figure gifts and beyond.
- A skilled relationship builder, storyteller, and listener who thrives on connecting people with purpose.
- A high degree of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth donors.
- Demonstrable knowledge of fundraising best practices.
- Motivated by mission-driven work and excited to represent a university that is shaping the global future.
- Familiar with the U.S. philanthropic landscape and comfortable working autonomously in a transatlantic context.
- Excellent critical thinking and listening skills; excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Must possess a university degree and a genuine passion for science, education, and innovation.
- Fluent in English, any other language desirable.

LOCATION AND COMPENSATION

- **Location:** United States (preferably East Coast or any major fundraising hub). Travelling across the country will be required, and occasional visits to Zurich, Switzerland.

- **Employment:** Permanent, 80 – 100 % FTE.
- **Compensation:** Competitive nonprofit salary commensurate with senior fundraising roles in major U.S. markets, plus comprehensive health, retirement, and paid-leave benefits.

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/eth-zurich-foundation/principal-gift-officer>

Jack Gorman, Partner
Bryce Ervin, Senior Associate
Sandeep Kaur, Senior Search Coordinator

ETH Zurich Foundation is an equal-opportunity employer. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals regardless of gender, nationality, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age or disability. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where every team member can thrive and contribute to excellence in science and society.