



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME

Chief Advancement Officer
The American University of Rome
Rome, Italy

THE SEARCH

[The American University of Rome](#) (AUR), the oldest American degree-granting institution in Rome, Italy, seeks an aspirational, engaging, and collaborative advancement professional to serve as the Chief Advancement Officer (CAO). Reporting to the president of AUR and serving as an integral member of the presidential leadership council, the CAO will provide strategic vision, leadership, and direction for all fundraising and alumni engagement activities. Following enormous strides in growth in recent years and a current, transformative campus expansion, AUR is poised to enter a new stage marked by amplified reach and impact. In close collaboration with senior leadership and the university community, the CAO will play a critical role in shaping AUR's future for years to come.

Established in 1969, AUR is a private liberal arts university founded on the idea that Rome is an ideal classroom and that a student's educational experience is broadened and enriched by living in a multicultural environment. A unique and extraordinary institution, AUR's faculty and staff teach, engage, and support approximately 700 undergraduate and graduate students representing over 50 countries. While all programs are conducted in English, 28 native languages are spoken among faculty and students. AUR's academic programs are defined by a combination of theory and practice, abundant opportunities to gain real-world experience, and small classes that create intimate learning environments.

Under the leadership of President Scott Sprenger, the CAO will join AUR at an inflection point as the University embarks on a new chapter marked by substantial enrollment growth and comprehensive strategic planning, including a significant expansion project that will double AUR's campus. For the first time in AUR's history, the University has the opportunity to develop a fully-fledged, student-centered campus. The impact of this expansion and the creation of new facilities will have a transformational impact on the University and student success. The CAO will partner closely with the president, senior leadership, and the board of trustees, providing visionary leadership and strategic thinking to advance the campaign supporting this effort – [Our Time is Now](#) – in addition to furthering institutional goals and supporting sustainable philanthropic growth. Leading AUR's advancement office, the CAO will design and implement a comprehensive, best-in-class fundraising program, elevate and mature the office's operations, cultivate and engage alumni and family networks, and raise the university's profile both locally and internationally.

The American University of Rome has retained the services of Jack Gorman of Isaacson, Miller, the national executive search firm, to conduct the search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

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The American University of Rome enrolls approximately 700 students, providing an American liberal arts and pre-professional education to students from across the globe through Associates, Bachelors, and Masters degrees. Overlooking the historical center of Rome from the beautiful Janiculum Hill, AUR's campus offers a safe and peaceful environment for learning and provides spectacular views of the city and surrounding hills.

AUR is an attractive university for degree-seeking students desiring an international learning experience through well-established programs. It is also a popular destination for study abroad students. AUR excels in international higher education and is a long-time partner with renowned universities in the U.S. to provide a range of academically rigorous, locale-based programs. Although global in its outlook, AUR is firmly rooted in the local community, with strong links to Italian and European institutions.

AUR's institutional priorities are to:

1. Leverage AUR's location in Rome, Italy, and Europe for optimal, mission-driven teaching & learning experiences.
2. Strive for teaching and learning excellence (via a purpose-driven, interdisciplinary curriculum, student-centered pedagogies, research & academic services aligned with institutional mission and values, and partnerships) to achieve optimal graduate outcomes and academic reputation.
3. Continuously recruit for and nurture a globally diverse, inclusive, and ethics-based learning community of internationally-minded students, faculty & staff.
4. Maintain a beautiful and up-to-date campus & infrastructure that aligns with AUR's mission and student expectations.
5. Achieve long-term institutional growth & sustainability.

Academic Programs

Taking the best of the American approach to interdisciplinary, student-centered learning, AUR uses Rome as a classroom and Italy and Europe as invaluable resources. Academic and co-curricular programs promote intellectual excellence, personal growth, and an appreciation of cultural diversity, and prepare students to enter excellent graduate schools or to embark directly on a chosen career path.

At the undergraduate level, AUR offers 10 bachelor's degree programs with 16 concentrations or tracks, two associate degree programs, and 23 minors. With a student-faculty ratio of 14:1, teaching and learning at AUR is intimate and student-focused.

To ensure students make the most of their time in Italy, AUR provides courses and social experiences that facilitate successful integration into the community. For study abroad students whose stay is usually one semester, AUR offers courses focused on Italian culture and encourages intercultural communication. Internships are supported in all programs, and in 2023, AUR piloted a new initiative called *Real Projects* in which small teams of students work collaboratively on a project for a company or nonprofit organization, providing another venue for students to engage in real-world, hands-on learning.

The Graduate School offers three Master of Arts programs: Cultural Heritage, Food Studies, and Peace Studies & Conflict Resolution. Graduate programs emphasize skill development and are designed to nurture mission-driven, theoretically informed, yet pragmatic problem solvers. The programs encourage an innovative community-based approach through unique collaborations with local organizations. All graduate programs are 15 months long and designed with professionals in mind, although they are open to students coming directly out of an undergraduate program.

The AUR faculty includes approximately 20 full-time professors and 80 adjunct faculty. Faculty are active researchers with established or growing reputations and expert teachers. Many faculty hold degrees from leading global institutions and/or possess high-profile industry experience in their fields.

Advancement

The American University of Rome stands at a moment of major institutional transformation, marked by the successful expansion of the AUR campus and the launch of a corresponding \$10 million fundraising campaign, *Our Time is Now*. At the beginning of 2025, AUR finalized the contract for the lease of the full Barnabite monastery complex, completing a two-year negotiation and doubling the size of the campus. With historic momentum, a compelling philanthropic vision, and a transformative challenge gift in motion, AUR is well-positioned to enter the new fiscal year with focus, urgency, and opportunity.

Leadership

President Scott Sprenger

Dr. Scott Sprenger began his tenure as President of The American University of Rome on 1 July 2020. He came to the post after serving as Provost of The American University of Paris (AUP), Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University in Utah, associate dean of the College of Humanities at Brigham Young University (BYU) as well as professor of French Literature and European Studies.

President Sprenger's administrative work as both provost and dean has covered a broad range of traditional areas, such as strategic planning, institutional budgeting, curriculum development and oversight, international programming, academic and career advising, and the creation and oversight of research centers and fundraising operations. At AUP, he secured Andrew W. Mellon institutional grants to improve first-year programs and to open a Civic Media Lab and a Center for Critical Democracy Studies.

With private funding, he oversaw the founding of a Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights, and Conflict Prevention and a Center for Design.

While at BYU, President Sprenger was the architect of Humanities+, an innovative and comprehensive approach to bridging liberal arts and humanities study to careers in the global labor market. Humanities+ has been acclaimed in the national press and by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as one of the most innovative initiatives in the liberal arts and careers in the United States. He has also advocated for the humanities and liberal arts with the U.S. Congress via the Humanities Alliance Conference, on radio, podcasts, and YouTube, and in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Dr. Sprenger's graduate degrees in French Studies are from Johns Hopkins University and Emory University. In 2009, he was the recipient of a Fulbright Scholar award at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris and Brussels for work on language policy in the EU. He was also awarded an Andrew W. Mellon post-doctoral position at the Humanities Center at UCLA from 1999 to 2001.

President Sprenger's main publications are on modern European literature and culture and higher education.

AUR Board of Trustees

The American University of Rome's Board of Trustees is the University's highest governing body. The Board is responsible for the oversight and conduct of the University, including academic and financial policy-making, financial health, and welfare.

AUR's Board is a diverse group combining longstanding trustees with dynamic new members with backgrounds in law, finance, technology, communications, and the arts. Chaired since mid-2022 by seasoned executive Thomas McCarthy, former CFO of The Cigna Group, the Board is actively shaping the University's expansion, strategic goals, and global engagement. More information about the Board, officers, and trustees can be found [here](#).

ROLE OF THE CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER

Reporting to the president, the chief advancement officer will lead AUR's advancement office, developing and executing vision and strategy for development and alumni relations. Working closely with university colleagues and senior leadership, the CAO will develop and implement a strategic, comprehensive advancement program and grow and elevate advancement office operations. The CAO will cultivate alumni and family networks, enhancing the impact of AUR's engagement and stewardship programs, and raise the University's profile both locally and internationally. The CAO is an integral member of the university's senior management team, contributing to strategic planning and institutional leadership.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assess the fundraising success and potential of AUR; craft a sophisticated multi-year strategy that leverages institutional strengths and assets to cultivate a culture of philanthropy and sustainably increase philanthropic support in keeping with the mission, core values, and institutional priorities of AUR.
- Develop a deep understanding of AUR's community, culture, mission, institutional strategy, and goals, and apply this knowledge to all advancement efforts.
- Collaborate with the president and senior colleagues to support the University's mission, vision, and long- and short-term objectives.
- Build a diversified fundraising portfolio, including annual fund contributions, corporate and foundation grants, board and leadership giving, and major gifts and lead donations for campaigns and endowment development.
- Cultivate and strengthen alumni and constituent relationships, with a strong focus on stewardship of existing supporters.
- Serve as a member of the university leadership team and maintain close working relationships with university partners, the board of trustees, and key external constituents.
- Lead planning and execution of fundraising and capital campaigns, including the current *Our Time is Now* campaign, supporting AUR's ambitious campus expansion.
- Act as the primary liaison for advancement to the Board of Trustees. Engage with the president and members of the board to review governance practices and policies to strengthen the support of institutional priorities.
- Provide strategic leadership for alumni relations, parent engagement, former board members, and other key constituent relationships.
- Collaborate with communications and marketing to design and implement compelling internal and external communications, including CRM systems, marketing collateral, and video content.
- Work with the chief financial officer to develop giving projections that inform budget strategy and accurate reporting for board meetings.
- Collaborate with the director of marketing to coordinate marketing strategy and collateral for fundraising efforts.
- Represent AUR externally, fostering partnerships with corporate, business, and community leaders to strengthen the university's network and visibility.

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- Actively engage in the advancement profession, attend CASE and other relevant conferences, and maintain AUR's visibility among peer institutions.
 - Stay informed about best practices and emerging technologies in fundraising and donor relations.
 - Support AUR's commitment to providing broad access to AUR by raising funds to expand opportunities for students globally.
 - Be a collaborative, communicative colleague who contributes constructively and respectfully to institutional dialogue and mission alignment.
 - Perform other duties as assigned by the president.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will possess at least seven years of fundraising experience, preferably in a higher education environment.

In addition, the successful candidate will demonstrate many, if not all, of the following skills and competencies:

- Experience building or elevating fundraising programs, resulting in an increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization.
- Knowledge of best practices in all key areas of fundraising, including donor qualification and discovery, and strategic planning.
- A proven track record of success in personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major gifts from individual donors; a high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth individuals and organizational leaders.
- Strong leadership and decision-making skills; the instinct and ability to develop recommendations and strategies for fundraising success that are consistent with the overall strategic plan and fundraising priorities for the American University of Rome.
- The credibility, maturity, and sound judgment required to effectively engage and leverage leadership, volunteers, and other key constituents in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of key prospects and donors.
- A diplomatic and collaborative demeanor; the political savvy to navigate a highly complex institution; the desire and ability to gain trust and build strong collaborative relationships with all members across a complex organization.
- Demonstrated experience utilizing data and metrics to inform strategy and as a foundation for development programs; impeccable attention to detail and superb follow-through.

- Superior written and oral communication skills with the ability to succinctly communicate a vision and process to senior leaders and other key audiences and constituents.
- Exemplary interpersonal and listening skills, as well as a high degree of comfort working internationally with cultural sensitivity.
- Excellent judgment and creative problem-solving skills, including the ability to meaningfully contribute to a growing and evolving organization.
- Creativity, flexibility, a high level of responsiveness, and the ability to work effectively in a fast-paced environment.
- Must be willing and able to travel extensively in support of fundraising, donor relations, campaign activity, and institutional representation.
- Bachelor's degree is required; master's degree is preferred.

LOCATION

AUR's campus is situated at the top of Janiculum Hill in the Monteverde district—one of Rome's most desirable residential areas—and overlooks the historic city center, medieval Trastevere, and the Tiber River. The University is an urban campus composed of five buildings. The main campus is formed of two buildings, an auditorium, and a spacious garden. In early 2025, AUR finalized the contract for the lease of the full Barnabite monastery complex, completing a two-year negotiation and doubling the size of the campus. This position will be based in the United States, preferably on the East Coast in the Northeast corridor, or in Rome, Italy.

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 below. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/american-university-rome/chief-advancement-officer>

Jack Gorman, Partner
Bryce Ervin, Senior Associate
Lisa Clayton, Senior Search Coordinator

The American University of Rome is an equal-opportunity employer committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic environment. We strongly encourage applications from individuals who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, and candidates of all genders are welcome to apply.