



# Saint Peter's UNIVERSITY

The Jesuit University of New Jersey

## Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Strategic Engagement

Saint Peter's University

Jersey City, New Jersey

*Saint Peter's University, inspired by its Jesuit, Catholic identity, commitment to individual attention, and grounding in the liberal arts, educates a diverse community of learners in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs to excel intellectually, lead ethically, serve compassionately and promote justice in our ever-changing urban and global environment.*

– Mission Statement

## THE SEARCH

Saint Peter's University (SPU, Saint Peter's, or the University) seeks an entrepreneurial, community-centered, and deeply experienced advancement leader to serve as its next Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Strategic Engagement (Vice President, VPIA). One of 27 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States, SPU was founded in 1872 and serves the most diverse student body of all Jesuit higher education institutions in the nation. SPU's founding mission around social mobility – to prepare students of all backgrounds to be leaders in their individual lives and broader communities – is more relevant than ever and offers a powerful narrative platform from which to advocate for institutional resources and wide-ranging philanthropic engagement.

Reporting to the President, the Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Strategic Engagement serves as the chief advancement officer for Saint Peter's University. This pivotal leadership role is responsible for strategically envisioning and directing all advancement functions to secure significant philanthropic support and foster strong alumni and donor engagement. The Vice President will spearhead capital campaigns, cultivate and solicit major and principal gifts, oversee annual giving, corporate and foundation relations, leadership and planned giving, advancement operations (CRM, reporting, analytics, prospect research and management), and alumni and donor engagement. Collaborating closely with Cabinet colleagues and the Board of Trustees, the Vice President will champion a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence in fundraising to achieve overarching institutional goals.

Rooted in the Jesuit Catholic tradition, the Vice President ensures that all advancement efforts reflect and reinforce the University's values of *cura personalis* (care for the whole person), service, social justice, and the pursuit of academic excellence. The successful candidate will assess institutional needs, serve as a trusted advisor to the president, and chart the course of the institution's advancement strategic plan. An exemplary external representative for SPU among a variety of audiences, the VPIA will help to scaffold and sustain the required infrastructure to bolster long-term, sustainable philanthropic success.

In particular, the next Vice President will:

- Craft and execute upon a compelling and competitive vision for the future of Saint Peter's strategic advancement.
- Develop and lead future institutional fundraising campaigns.
- Embrace and advance the Jesuit tradition that is integral to Saint Peter's core identity.
- Recruit, retain, and develop top-notch advancement staff.
- Ensure the University's future financial strength and stability by cultivating a culture of community and philanthropic engagement.
- Partner across the institution to scale alumni giving.

The University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. All expressions of interest from qualified candidates are encouraged. Inquiries, nominations, and applications can be directed in confidence to the firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

## SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY: THEN AND NOW

Chartered in 1872 by the New Jersey legislature, Saint Peter's was originally founded as Saint Peter's College, an independent liberal arts college of men in downtown Jersey City. Following a dramatic decline in enrollment as a result of World War I, the institution was forced to close in 1918. Saint Peter's reopened in 1930, adopted the peacock as its official mascot, reflecting the spirit of resurrection and eternal life, and moved to its current location in 1936. Women entered the evening division, now known as the School of Professional Studies, in the 1930s. In 1966, women were first admitted to the day session, and now women constitute over 59 percent of the overall student population. Saint Peter's offered its first graduate program in education in 1980. On August 17, 2012, Saint Peter's College officially became known as Saint Peter's University.

One of 27 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States, SPU is today recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and a Carnegie Community-Engaged Institution, as well as a First-Gen Forward Institution, and boasts a long legacy of educating immigrants and first-generation students. Reflecting its strong commitment to access and affordability, Saint Peter's was ranked 7th overall Best Value in the Regional Universities North category in the 2025 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges Rankings. Nearly 98 percent of students rely on scholarship support to afford their education, and half of Pell recipients have no estimated family contribution. Notably, SPU has seen a significant increase in the

six-year graduation rates for Hispanic students – from 43 percent for the Fall 2010 cohort to 64 percent for the Fall 2016 cohort – and the overall graduation rate also increased from 54 percent to 60 percent during this period.

The University now offers undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees, and has shifted from a largely commuter school to one with a sizeable residential component; approximately 25 percent of undergraduates live on campus. At the same time, the University also now offers programs online, while still maintaining a strong sense of community. Faculty, staff, and students alike feel very deeply tied to SPU's commitment to Jersey City, Hudson County, and New Jersey as a whole. The undergraduate population largely derives from surrounding communities, with approximately 80 percent of full-time undergraduates and 88 percent of part-time undergraduates identifying as New Jersey residents. Twenty-six percent of graduate students identify as international. The University is committed to uniting its domestic and international student populations, with foundational commitments to community engagement and service as primary facets of every student's experience.

## MISSION AND JESUIT, CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Saint Peter's educational mission is inspired by the nearly 500-year-old tradition of Jesuit education first established by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. The tradition is manifested in a strong core curriculum, personal care for its students and each other, the nurturing of intellectual and spiritual freedom, and the development of men and women with and for others. The student-centric community of Saint Peter's University remains fiercely dedicated to *cura personalis*, care and personal attention to the development of the whole person. At SPU, the liberal arts curriculum remains a primary means to cultivate in students a well-rounded education informed by ethical reflection and practice.

The Jesuit tradition informs the activities sponsored by Campus Ministry, which encourages students' commitment to spiritual development, service, and progressive activism. Through Campus Ministry's community service programs, students have a wide array of volunteer opportunities available to them locally, nationally, and internationally. Although Saint Peter's is a Catholic, Jesuit institution, Campus Ministry welcomes students of all religious faiths and backgrounds, including those with no religious affiliation, and offers a variety of services for students, such as retreat programs and spiritual advising.

## Students, Faculty, and Staff

In the Fall of 2024, the University enrolled approximately 3,500 full-time and part-time students in programs leading to bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as other forms of professional certification. The undergraduate population totaled approximately 2,260. Seventy-nine percent of full-time undergraduates and 93 percent of part-time undergraduates are New Jersey residents. Fifty-nine percent of undergraduate students identify as women, 68 percent as students of color, and seven percent are international students.

The number of graduate students has contracted following recent shifts in federal policy and now represents 35 percent of total students. The University's graduate population totals approximately 1,240 in Fall of 2024, with 50 percent identifying as women and 22 percent as students of color. Twenty-six percent are international students. Saint Peter's is alma mater to more than 30,000 living alumni, more than 7,000 of whom are alumni of the graduate programs.

The faculty of Saint Peter's University is comprised of 343 members, including 103 full-time and 240 part-time members. The student-faculty ratio for Fall 2024 is approximately 12 to one for full-time undergraduate students and 18 to one for all full-time students. SPU employs 243 full-time and part-time staff members.

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Hubert Benitez, D.D.S., Ph.D., took office on July 1, 2024, as the 23rd president of Saint Peter's University. As president, Dr. Benitez serves as chief executive and administrative officer of the University and works in close collaboration with the Board of Trustees and with internal and external constituencies to provide overall leadership and direction for the institution. Dr. Benitez came to Saint Peter's University having dedicated the last two decades of his career in higher education as an academic, administrator, and faculty member, with significant experience in public, private, and Jesuit higher education institutions. He previously spent 15 years as a clinician and is passionately committed to access and opportunity, social justice, and working with first-generation and diverse student bodies.

Saint Peter's is governed by a 28-member Board of Trustees. The Trustees oversee the leadership, planning, and resources of the University, ensuring its overall vitality and mission. Kenneth Moore '91 is currently serving as the chair of the board. Mr. Moore is chief operating officer of Jennison Associates in Manhattan.

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND FINANCES

More than 30,000 Saint Peter's alumni serve as lifelong stakeholders and are the University's largest constituency group. SPU graduates are connected by a transformational, Jesuit educational experience and remain committed to the University's health and future. Saint Peter's Alumni Board promotes alumni participation and involvement in the current life of their alma mater, along with the advancement of the University, while supporting opportunities for social, intellectual, and spiritual enrichment for graduates.

In June of 2024, Saint Peter's announced the conclusion of the Peacocks Rise: Campaign for Saint Peter's University, the University's largest and most successful fundraising campaign. The campaign raised in excess of \$86 million, surpassing its original goal of \$75 million. Buoyed by an unprecedented run to the Elite Eight in the 2022 NCAA Division I Men's Regional Basketball Tournament, gifts and pledges to the University surged by 278 percent, and applications increased by 59 percent. The campaign secured transformational scholarships, revitalized signature facilities, amplified unrestricted giving, and generated

investments in students and infrastructure that helped SPU realize greater academic and athletic distinction. Among the signature donations were \$10 million for development of the west campus and for scholarships, another \$10 million gift to transform the School of Business, and a \$5 million lead gift for phased renovation of the Yanitelli Recreational Life Center. Annual unrestricted giving is also positive, with a record 6,500 donors choosing not to specify the use of their gift to Saint Peter's during the *Peacocks Rise campaign*.

Since 2015, SPU has competed successfully for federal grants totaling nearly \$20 million, including grants funded by the Title III-Part F HSI-STEM (\$3.9 million and \$4.8 million), TRiO Student Support Services (\$1.3 million), two Title V HSI (\$6 million) programs, and three grants from the National Science Foundation (\$3.6M). In the Fall of 2023, the University was awarded a Title V grant for \$3 million. The Bienestar (Wellbeing) for All grant will support four transformational activities: (1) the creation of a Center for Inclusive Excellence to offer programs for students, faculty, and staff that foster inclusion, sense of belonging, and wellbeing; (2) curriculum and faculty development to enhance the Ignatian Seminar curriculum and establish a program to support students returning to their studies after pandemic-related interruptions or other reasons; (3) the development of the First Strut program to serve first-generation students, offer a Career Closet that provides access to professional attire, and expand participation in experiential learning through funded co-curricular opportunities; and (4) support college readiness by enabling the University to re-engage with high schools and other organizations through creative mentoring, leadership development, and new outreach programs.

Saint Peter's reports total assets of \$187 million, an annual operating budget of \$80 million for FY2024, and an endowment of approximately \$37 million. Like many higher education institutions, Saint Peter's has seen a decline in undergraduate enrollment in recent years, from 2,641 in Fall 2018 to approximately 2,020 in Fall 2023. However, graduate enrollment ballooned from 811 to 1,580 during this same period due primarily to the development of new graduate programs in business and STEM fields. Recent shifts in federal policies have led to a significant reduction in international student enrollment, and a looming Pell Grant shortfall challenges Saint Peter's long-standing commitment to providing financial aid to 100% of full-time undergraduate students.

## CAMPUS

Saint Peter's main campus comprises nearly 25 acres in the heart of Jersey City. Approximately 25 percent of full-time undergraduate students live in four University residence halls. Designed with input from students, the [Mac Mahon Student Center](#) features living room areas, a coffee shop, a University store, spacious dining areas, fitness and game rooms, office space, and The Duncan Family Sky Room, an event space that accommodates 430 and offers breathtaking skyline views of New York City. SPU's [Theresa and Edward O'Toole Library](#) includes a modernized Digital Research Commons and the Digital Humanities Center. The [Victor R. Yanitelli Recreational Life Center](#), a 125,000-square-foot facility, houses the athletics programs, and the University's Joseph J. Jaroschak Field is just minutes from campus.

Funded primarily from donations, Saint Peter's campus has undergone long-awaited renovations in the last five years. For example, technological and space upgrades to the Guarini School of Business were financed through a \$10 million donation from Congressman Frank J. Guarini. The renovation of the new Run Baby Run Arena was funded by a \$5 million gift from alumnus Thomas P. Mac Mahon. The creation and then expansion of the STEM Engagement and Empowerment Center – with classroom upgrades and the addition of a hydroponics lab – was funded by two successive Title III HSI STEM grants of \$8.7 million. The University has also renovated the Center for Academic Success and Engagement with funds through a \$2.9 million Title V HSI grant, including creating an instructional design space, a media center, and a writing studio.

## JERSEY CITY

Jersey City was cited as the most diverse city in the nation by Wallet Hub in 2022. With a population of more than 290,000, it is the second largest city in New Jersey and the county seat of Hudson County. Bounded on the east by the Hudson River and Upper New York Bay and on the west by the Hackensack River and Newark Bay, Jersey City boasts more than 30 miles of waterfront and extensive rail infrastructure and connectivity. With downtown Manhattan only five miles and an easy 12-minute train ride away, Saint Peter's students, faculty, and staff experience the best of both Jersey City and New York City – two of the most sophisticated cities and cultural centers in the world. As one of the largest centers of banking and finance in the United States, the financial center of downtown Jersey City's waterfront skyline is nicknamed Wall Street West. Jersey City is a melting pot of diverse cultures; a growing arts destination, particularly with the upcoming and highly anticipated opening of the Centre Pompidou's first North American site; and a new outpost for Hollywood film and television production.

## ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

A direct report to President Benitez and a key member of the presidential cabinet, the VPIA will provide strategic leadership for SPU's advancement apparatus, growing the Office of Advancement while creating a culture of community and philanthropic engagement. The VPIA will work closely with the Board of Regents and partner with the Board of Trustees to amplify the development and recommendation of prospective donors. A detail-oriented and results-driven leader, the incoming VPIA will bring a track record of success in facilitating campaigns and securing major gifts. This position requires strong communication skills, exceptional judgement, and clear, visionary leadership.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Strategic Engagement of Saint Peter's University will be empowered to address these key opportunities and challenges:

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**Craft and execute upon a compelling and competitive vision for the future of Saint Peter's strategic advancement.**

- Develop an ambitious strategic plan for advancement that supports multi-year, sustainable philanthropic growth and aligns with the broader University strategic plan.
- Remain abreast of new trends in advancement and explore innovative, modernized approaches to philanthropic engagement.
- Leverage and cultivate relationships across the University and with the Board of Trustees to develop strategic objectives, assess institutional needs, and execute upon SPU's next comprehensive fundraising campaign.

**Ensure the University's future financial strength and stability by cultivating a culture of community and philanthropic engagement.**

- Advise and support the president in his role as chief fundraiser; serve as a co-strategist and thought partner in the cultivation and solicitation of transformational gifts.
- Create a shared understanding of institutional objectives and best practices in prospect strategy, solicitation, and raising major and capital gifts.
- Develop and lead future institutional fundraising campaigns and utilize modern best practices for engagement and solicitation.

**Recruit, retain, and develop top-notch advancement staff.**

- Lead, motivate, and inspire a team of talented and highly productive advancement professionals who are prepared to meet SPU's ambitious goals of expanding and broadening philanthropic support.
- Set clearly defined and measurable goals and leverage data-driven metrics to assess performance; foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.
- Adopt best practices in annual evaluations of results throughout the Office and in setting objectives for the coming year.

**Partner across the institution to scale major giving.**

- Deepen donor relationships through targeted "insider" communications and stewardship; ensure that capital gifts are thoughtfully stewarded on a regular basis, setting the stage for future investments.
- Leverage the highly engaged and impassioned Offices of the President and Mission Integration & Ministry to tap into novel industry and community-based philanthropic supporters.
- Partner with the Offices of Alumni Engagement and Communications and Marketing to highlight SPU's Jesuit mission, alumni achievement, community impact, and the outcomes of recent philanthropic engagement and advancement programs.



## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Saint Peter's University seeks a proven leader with a distinctive record of achievement in the field of advancement who will have most, if not all, of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities listed below:

- Experience working with institutional leadership to assess aspirations and needs, consider feasibility and donor interest, and then craft aspirational objectives to move the institution forward in measurable ways.
- A resonance with Jesuit education and to both the personal and professional development that accompanies it; a commitment to advancing the Jesuit tradition that is integral to Saint Peter's core identity;
- Moral leadership and adherence to the highest standards of honesty and integrity;
- Knowledge of the issues and challenges facing higher education, including finances, athletics, and shifting market dynamics; understanding of the interplay between academic priorities and resource requirements; and experience setting and overseeing budgets;
- Significant and successful experience managing, allocating, and prioritizing financial, physical, and human resources;
- Demonstrated ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an advancement program through use of data and assessment tools;
- Experience building upon an existing advancement program, resulting in a transformative increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization;
- A collaborative and transparent interpersonal style that fosters an environment of trust and empowerment; exemplary communication and listening skills and the ability to translate information across a broad variety of audiences;
- An established record in fundraising, including an ability to engage a broader community in support of the University, and an enthusiasm for and successful experience with major donor, foundation, and corporate relationships, or evidence of such capacity;
- At least 10 years of progressively responsible fundraising and managerial experience in advancement, preferably within higher education;
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

Saint Peter's University is located in Jersey City, NJ.

The expected salary range will be in the low to mid \$200,000s.



## 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 for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/saint-peters-university/vice-president-institutional-advancement>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Phillip Petree, Partner  
Afi Tettey-Fio, Senior Associate  
Ryan Smillie, Senior Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller Inc.

*Saint Peter's University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer and desires to ensure that faculty, students, and staff members from underrepresented and marginalized populations are an integral part of the life and governance of the institution.*