

Carnegie Mellon University

Chief Advancement Officer
Carnegie Mellon University, College of Engineering
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

THE SEARCH

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) seeks a seasoned and inspirational fundraising professional to serve as the next chief advancement officer (CAO) for the College of Engineering. Joining [Dean Burcu Akinci](#) at the outset of her tenure and serving as an integral member of the Dean's senior management team, the CAO will provide bold strategic vision, leadership, and direction for all fundraising, alumni engagement, and stewardship activities for COE. This is a unique opportunity for a proven development professional to partner with a dynamic and energetic dean to further advance and deliver on the College's mission.

Recognized for the excellence and societal impact of its programs, the [College of Engineering](#) at Carnegie Mellon consistently ranks as one of the top engineering colleges in the country, currently ranked #10 in the 2026 *U.S. News & World Report* ranking of graduate engineering programs. Approximately 900 faculty and staff members span ten academic degree-granting departments and institutes, and the College's global reach includes degree-granting locations in Rwanda and Silicon Valley in addition to the main campus in Pittsburgh. With a student enrollment of more than 4,700, the College of Engineering constitutes the largest of Carnegie Mellon's schools and colleges. It offers 11 undergraduate majors across seven departments, 20 master's programs, and 11 doctoral programs.

The CAO will benefit from Dean Akinci's commitment to development-related activities, serving as her chief strategist on all fundraising matters, and will work in partnership with the Dean and department chairs to identify fundraising priorities and opportunities for the College. With a dotted line report to the associate vice president for development in the Office of University Advancement, the CAO will further develop and refine the overall strategy for COE in conjunction with University Advancement colleagues.

This is an exceptional opportunity for a high-performing, energetic, collaborative, imaginative, well-organized, and accomplished leader to further elevate COE's development program through expansion of

the current prospect base to include unaffiliated donors, the implementation of best practices, team and capacity building, calculated risk-taking, and the application of data-driven strategies that will create a philanthropic enterprise of unsurpassed effectiveness. With at least 10 years of leadership experience in successful development operations, preferably in complex research university environments, the ideal candidate must possess strong strategic planning, managerial, and motivational skills; a keen understanding of best practices in fundraising and a comprehensive knowledge of all major development functions, including a depth of campaign experience; and a track record of significant personal success in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship at major and principal gift levels.

The CAO must possess high levels of integrity, credibility, and drive; be good-natured, flexible, and open-minded; and be able to adapt in a dynamic environment. The candidate must possess very well-developed interpersonal and negotiation skills, and the desire and ability to build bridges and strong collaborative relationships with all members of an operation across a university, ideally approaching their work with enthusiasm and a sense of humor. A bachelor's degree is required.

Carnegie Mellon University has retained Mr. Jack Gorman of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller, to assist in conducting this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to Isaacson, Miller as indicated at the end of this document and will be held in the strictest confidence.

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

A member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), [Carnegie Mellon University](#) is a global, research-intensive university with more than 16,600 students, 6,700 faculty and staff, and 127,000 active alumni. Since its founding in 1900, the University has been a birthplace of innovation. Its award-winning faculty members are renowned for inspiring students to think ambitiously and creatively, to interpret with insight, and to solve major scientific, technological, and societal challenges. As a result, its students are recruited by some of the most forward-thinking organizations throughout the world. The University has embraced a deep commitment to solving problems through collaborative integration of multiple perspectives and disciplines, with an emphasis on creativity, innovation, and the human element, to enable pervasive and sustainable societal impact.

Carnegie Mellon was founded on the principle of education as a force to enhance careers, lives, and communities, as reflected in Andrew Carnegie's oft-quoted words: "My heart is in the work." Students at Carnegie Mellon embrace a multi-faceted learning environment infused with opportunities for students to be engaged in formal and informal research, in project courses designed for interdisciplinary problem solving, and in learning opportunities in and out of the classroom, lab, studio, and stage. Seven schools and colleges comprise the University: College of Engineering, College of Fine Arts, Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy, Mellon College of Science, School of Computer Science, and the Tepper School of Business. CMU has its main 122-acre campus in Pittsburgh, a branch campus in Doha and Qatar, additional locations and other instructional sites in Kigali, Rwanda, Silicon Valley, New York City, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and various locations in Portugal.

Carnegie Mellon University puts a strong emphasis on creativity – from art to robots to policy – to address cultural imperatives and enrich lives. It is a global leader in taking ground-breaking ideas quickly to market and in creating successful entrepreneurial ventures. It ranks first among U.S. universities without a medical school in the number of start-up companies created per research dollar spent since 2007. In addition, CMU spinoffs represent more than a third of the total companies created in Pennsylvania in recent years. Altogether, CMU has helped to greenlight more than 1,000 companies, creating jobs across the U.S. and internationally. In early 2011, the World Economic Forum invited CMU to become a permanent member of its Global University Leaders Forum. Business members of the Forum include the world’s top 1,000 companies, which drive the economy forward and collaborate on shaping global, regional, and industry agendas. CMU is one of only 29 universities in the world – and one of 12 universities in the U.S. – to be invited to join.

College of Engineering

Widely regarded as one of the preeminent engineering institutions in the world, the [College of Engineering](#) ranks as the tenth-best in graduate engineering and the eighth-best in undergraduate engineering in the United States, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The College is home to more than 4,700 students, which include more than 800 doctoral candidates across 11 distinct PhD offerings, more than 1,900 master’s students in 20 unique programs, and more than 1,900 undergraduates in six primary undergraduate majors. It boasts over 36,000 living alumni. The College’s departments are [biomedical engineering](#), [chemical engineering](#), [civil and environmental engineering](#), [electrical and computer engineering](#), [engineering and public policy](#), [materials science and engineering](#), and [mechanical engineering](#). Across these programs, the College is known for its innovative and interdisciplinary “maker” culture aimed at addressing and solving complex societal problems.

With \$340.9M reported to *U.S. News & World Report* in 2025 in the Engineering discipline, the College is a national leader in federal and industry research programs. A commitment to integrating across engineering, sciences, arts, business, and other disciplines guides the College’s socially transformative research in advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, cyberphysical systems, cybersecurity, energy and environment, health and biomedicine, additive manufacturing, smart cities, and robotics, as well as many other areas.

The College engages meaningfully with other major institutes on campus, such as [The Robotics Institute](#), the world’s largest robotics research and development organization, which is creating the next generation of robotics for human interaction. It also plays a leadership role in a range of multidisciplinary centers advancing research on topics from environmental resilience to mobility.

The College of Engineering extends its reach beyond the main campus in Pittsburgh. It is a leading partner in [CMU-Africa](#), which was established in 2011 and remains the only U.S. research university offering master’s degrees in Africa on a campus with full-time faculty, staff, and operations. Born out of a partnership between CMU and the Government of Rwanda, CMU-Africa provides a platform to engage in Africa’s most significant opportunities and challenges through world-class education and contextually

relevant research. The College has been offering master's programs at its Silicon Valley campus since 2002, connecting many of its distinctive technology education programs to the innovative California business community. Through this location, the College has developed strategic partnerships with NASA and industry partners. The College is also home to the [CMU-Portugal Program](#), which includes dual-degree doctoral programs, as well as sponsored joint research projects with university and industry partners in Portugal.

Current Moment

The College of Engineering is in an excellent position to continue its global leadership, with research on the rise, an increasingly diverse faculty and student body, and expanding relationships with internal and external partners. In 2023, the College launched its current strategic plan, *Engineering Impact: Transformative Education and Pioneering Research for Real and Enduring Good*. New to her role as of January 2026, [Dean Akinci](#) will work with the community to realize this ambitious vision for the future, facilitating [Advanced Collaboration](#) and stewarding new initiatives.

Over the last few years, the College has completed two new state-of-the-art engineering facilities on the main campus ([Ansys Hall](#) and [Scaife Hall](#)), which added more than 120,000 square feet of labs, classrooms, and maker spaces, and, in collaboration with the Robotics Institute, recently opened the [Robotics Innovation Center](#), which provides an additional 150,000 square feet of open research space. The new space is located in the nearby Hazelwood community, in part to foster engagement between CMU researchers and the local community.

The College has developed several programs and resources to support research and educational activities. The [Engineering Research Accelerator](#) provides college-wide research development services to faculty members. The Accelerator's services include proposal support for large and center-level submissions, guidance for grant/contract preparation, technical editing and writing, and graphics. The College also plays a significant role in the [Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship](#), encouraging participation in center activities and entrepreneurial mentorship. The [College of Engineering Center for Faculty Success](#) provides orientation programming, professional and leadership development opportunities, and valuable resources to empower and recognize faculty success. The Center helps professors excel while balancing teaching, cutting-edge research, mentorship, and service workload to achieve career advancement and success.

CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER

The new CAO will join the College of Engineering at a moment of transition, working with a new dean who is a long-standing member of the College of Engineering in a variety of academic and leadership roles, and at a moment of reflection and reprioritization following the end of a [comprehensive campaign](#). The CAO will serve as a key partner as the Dean frames and realizes her vision for COE, and will provide leadership and management for the vision, direction, planning, and execution of fundraising and alumni relations activities for the College. This individual will bring a thoughtful, proactive, collaborative, and

entrepreneurial approach to leveraging COE's existing relationships as well as positioning the Dean and other key leadership to connect with philanthropists, entrepreneurs, alumni, and business leaders who may not yet be engaged with the College.

The CAO will inherit a high-performing team specializing in individual gifts, corporate philanthropy, and foundation support, as well as alumni relations. The CAO will lead the team to launch systematic initiatives to identify and cultivate the next generation of donors – domestically and internationally – while maintaining and strengthening ties to existing donors and seeking out new philanthropic opportunities. The CAO will lead by example, carrying a personal portfolio of major gift prospects.

The CAO will be active and visible on campus and in the greater community and will possess a deep appreciation for and the ability to clearly articulate the role and importance of a research university, as well as the achievements and aspirations of COE, to a broad and diverse audience.

Advancement Strategy and Leadership

- Provide leadership and management of the vision, direction, planning, and execution of fundraising and alumni engagement activities for the College of Engineering.
- Serve as a senior advisor to the Dean and a key member of the College's leadership team in shaping and implementing a comprehensive and effective advancement strategy.
- Identify, articulate, and prioritize fundraising and engagement opportunities aligned with the College's strategic objectives.
- Set strategy for and support the Dean's and senior faculty members' advancement and external engagement activities.

Fundraising & External Engagement

- Lead the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of individual and foundation donors in support of the College.
- Personally manage a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects and donors, including alumni and philanthropic leaders.
- Collaborate with faculty and academic leadership to translate research and educational strengths into compelling fundraising opportunities.
- Engage with the [Dean's Advocacy Council](#), setting their collective sights on the new Dean's priorities. Set strategy for recruitment, engagement, and stewardship of the College's advisory boards, councils, and volunteer leaders.

Collaboration and Integration

- Coordinate with central foundation relations, major gift officers, planned giving officers, CAOs of other colleges, and other teams to secure increased investment in the College of Engineering.
- Collaborate closely with central university advancement departments, including donor relations, alumni relations, advancement services, and strategic philanthropic initiatives.

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- Partner with advancement information services to define, measure, and report on advancement outcomes and performance.
 - Closely liaise with the [College's Partnership Office](#) to identify and interact with prospective donors who also represent industry and or government entities.

Operations, Reporting, and Management

- Report on the results of all advancement activities related to the College of Engineering.
- Manage the College's interest in the University's database of donors and prospects in alignment with University standards and systems.
- Devise and implement metrics to measure the performance of the advancement activities within the College of Engineering.
- Develop and manage the advancement office budget and allocate resources to support strategic priorities.

Team Leadership

- Lead, coach, and evaluate the performance of professional and support staff engaged in advancement and alumni relations.
- Build a high-performing, collaborative, and service-oriented advancement team.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The next CAO will have proven success leading development staff through the process of setting and achieving annual and long-range fundraising goals with an ability to transform new ideas into executable and enduring programs. The successful candidate must be a self-starter who operates with a sense of urgency and thinks strategically, analytically, and entrepreneurially, as well as a seasoned team leader adept at maximizing, leveraging, and advocating for a talented staff, and facilitating team success.

Lastly, the next CAO must possess a demonstrated commitment to the highest ethical standards and exhibit the credibility, maturity, and sophistication to effectively engage and partner with key internal and external stakeholders.

Additional qualifications are as follows:

- At least ten years of progressively responsible advancement or development experience in higher education, with at least five years in a management or leadership role; experience in a campaign environment is strongly preferred.
- Advanced knowledge of major gift fundraising, corporate and foundation giving, and comprehensive campaigns.
- Demonstrated success in developing and managing relationships with deans, faculty leaders, volunteer leadership, and major donors or prospects.
- Staff and program management experience in a complex organization.

- Excellent writing, interpersonal, analytical, and organizational skills.
- Ability to initiate, analyze, monitor, evaluate, and adapt strategic advancement plans to achieve revenue and engagement goals.
- Cultural sensitivity and ability to work effectively with a diverse alumni and donor population, domestically and internationally.
- In-depth knowledge of university governance, administration, and operations.
- Strong supervisory, coaching, and mentoring skills.
- High level of integrity, discretion, and sound judgment.
- Energetic, self-motivated, adaptable, and collaborative leadership style.
- Commitment to the mission and values of the University and the College of Engineering.
- Bachelor's degree required; master's degree preferred or equivalent combination of education and experience.

LOCATION AND COMPENSATION

Carnegie Mellon is deeply engaged with the City of Pittsburgh and the greater Pittsburgh region to the benefit of the University and the region. Over the last decade, as the area has established its identity as a technology hub for both startups and large corporations, that relationship has grown even stronger. Low costs of living, networking opportunities, small business accelerators, and an innovative community make the city appealing to entrepreneurs, especially recent graduates. There is a high density of software and robotics companies, in particular, that contribute to the growing technology and innovation ecosystem in the region, including ANSYS, Bosch, Google, Argo, and others, many with CMU roots and partnerships. The city is also home to the Department of Energy National Energy Technology Laboratory.

Pittsburgh has a vibrant research environment with numerous universities and research hospitals. CMU and the College of Engineering have multiple collaborative ventures, notably with the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), Allegheny Health Network, and Highmark.

Well known for its quality of life and frequently ranked among the most livable cities in the nation, Pittsburgh features a relatively low cost of living, a highly educated population, and an increasingly vibrant dining and social scene. The city features a suite of cultural institutions, four major professional sports teams, and a gateway to mountains, whitewater, and other outdoor activities. Many CMU faculty live close to campus, enjoying short walks or bike rides to work, a range of educational options for their children, nearby public transportation, parks, restaurants, and shopping, all within walking distance of home. CMU faculty, staff, and students increasingly enjoy a region with growing vitality and national reputation.

Compensation

Carnegie Mellon University offers a competitive salary and a wide variety of benefits and programs designed to meet the needs of its faculty and staff members. From its health and welfare plan offerings

to tuition benefits and competitive retirement plans, CMU is committed to providing benefits that support its staff through every stage of their career at CMU. You may learn more about CMU benefits [here](#).

Forbes annually ranks Carnegie Mellon University as one of the best employers in Pennsylvania. The list is compiled by anonymously surveying 80,000 Americans working for businesses with at least 500 employees to pinpoint the organizations liked best by employees. Respondents are asked to anonymously rate their employers on a variety of criteria and indicate how likely they'd be to recommend their employer to others.

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](#).

Jack Gorman, Partner
Elizabeth Neustaedter, Principal
Ryan Cheung, Senior Search Coordinator

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This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Carnegie Mellon University and the College of Engineering. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Carnegie Mellon University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.