



Vice President for Advancement + President of the GSU Foundation
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia

THE SEARCH

[Georgia State University](#) (Georgia State) seeks a proven, results-oriented, and deeply mission-driven vice president for advancement (VP) to lead all fundraising and alumni engagement efforts. The VP also serves as president of the [Georgia State University Foundation](#) (GSUF). Reporting to an ambitious and visionary leader in [President M. Brian Blake](#) and partnering closely with the GSUF Board of Trustees, the next VP will build and guide a high-performing advancement operation for a leading urban public R1 research institution on the rise. This opportunity comes at a moment of remarkable growth and transformation for both the university and the City of Atlanta as an economic and cultural center of the Southeast.

Georgia State is nationally recognized for academic quality, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to student success. With more than 53,000 students and over 300,000 alumni across the United States and around the world, Georgia State is one of the nation's largest and most diverse public universities and a driving force in the civic, economic, and cultural life of Atlanta and the State of Georgia. The university's economic impact on the Atlanta economy exceeds \$3.2 billion annually. Since President Blake's arrival in 2021, the university has advanced a visionary 10-year strategic plan, built momentum toward an ambitious comprehensive campaign, and accelerated major urban revitalization through its [Reshaping Downtown Atlanta](#) initiative against the backdrop of the city's preparations to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Recent investments are also fueling a [new vision for Georgia State Athletics](#), marked by an upcoming ribbon-cutting event set for its new [Georgia State Baseball Park](#) this fall. Georgia State has broken fundraising records in each of the last two years, raising \$107.7 million in FY 2024 and \$136.2 million in FY 2025, which included a transformative [\\$80 million gift from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation](#)—the largest gift in the university's history.

As a member of President Blake's senior cabinet, the VP will build upon the strong momentum of Georgia State's advancement program to help realize the university's ambitions and expand its regional impact and national leadership in educational access. The VP will serve as chief development and engagement officer and will lead a team of approximately 100 staff across annual giving and alumni engagement, corporate and foundation relations, major gifts, planned and special giving, athletics, advancement services, and finance and operations. The VP will articulate and advance an aspirational vision for Georgia State's fundraising ambitions by expanding and diversifying donor pipelines, catalyzing its premier corporate and foundation partnerships, strengthening the athletics enterprise, and inspiring authentic engagement across a vibrant and evolving constituent base, ranging from current students to first-generation mid-career graduates, to Atlanta-based global business executives.

The next VP will build donor capacity and commitment, bring fresh ideas that respond to the evolving nature of philanthropy, and apply data-driven strategies that translate knowledge and ideas into actionable growth. Critically, the VP will increase the impact and effectiveness of the advancement division and drive success for a comprehensive campaign slated to go public in the fall of 2026 with a likely \$600 million goal. The VP will be an exceptional storyteller and principal gift strategist, leading by example and maintaining an active personal fundraising portfolio. Additionally, the VP will nurture critical relationships within the GSUF Board of Trustees, advising on a range of decisions, including those impacting the university's endowment.

The ideal candidate will possess a minimum of 10 years of advancement leadership experience in institutions of similar complexity, preferably in a research university environment. This individual must be an inspirational leader and self-starter who advances a clear set of strategic priorities with efficiency; demonstrates a high level of integrity, trust, and resourcefulness; adapts in a dynamic environment; and exhibits the credibility and emotional intelligence to build impactful relationships across the university's broad range of internal and external constituencies. The selected candidate will possess strong strategic planning, managerial, communication, and motivational skills; a keen understanding of best practices in fundraising and a comprehensive knowledge of all major development and alumni engagement functions, including a depth of campaign experience; and a track record of significant personal results in principal and transformational gifts. As a key external representative of Georgia State, the VP must also reflect an appreciation for and desire to fully invest in the Atlanta Metropolitan region and serve a student-success-focused, urban, public, research-intensive university with strong ties to a complex 25-unit state system. A bachelor's degree is required.

Georgia State has retained Jack Gorman of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1913, Georgia State is located in the heart of downtown Atlanta and operates across six campuses throughout the metropolitan area, including the J. Mack Robinson School of Business Buckhead location. The university offers nearly 300 degree programs across 12 colleges, schools, and institutes, ranging from associate to doctoral and professional degrees. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Georgia State the No. 1 public university in the nation for undergraduate teaching for multiple consecutive years and consistently places the university among the most innovative public institutions in the country. Georgia State has become a national model for improving graduation and retention outcomes, demonstrating that an access-oriented public research university can deliver excellence and equity at scale.

For more information about Georgia State and its leadership, please visit www.gsu.edu and the addendum of this document.

Financial and Fundraising Overview

Georgia State's budget is funded by revenues from state appropriations, student tuition and fees, sponsored programs grants and contracts, as well as auxiliaries and sales. For FY 2026, the university operating budget was more than \$1.2 billion. Currently, GSUF's endowment is valued at \$300 million, which reflects an eight percent increase from the previous fiscal year.

In 2018, Georgia State closed *Burning Bright: The Campaign for Georgia State*, surpassing its \$300 million goal by raising more than \$322 million. Efforts toward the current campaign are well underway with a public launch date targeted for October 2026.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT + PRESIDENT OF THE GSU FOUNDATION

The VP will serve as a strategic partner to President Blake, as well as university and GSUF senior leadership, shaping a compelling philanthropic vision and advancing Georgia State's most ambitious priorities. The role calls for a sophisticated advancement leader who can assess institutional opportunity, architect and execute a multi-year fundraising strategy, and build the infrastructure, programs, and talent necessary to drive sustained philanthropic growth. Equally important is the ability to lead and inspire a large and complex team and engage trustees, alumni, volunteers, faculty, and other key constituents as valued partners in the university's future. With responsibility for strengthening current efforts while positioning Georgia State for its next chapter of campaign success, this leader will elevate donor engagement, broaden institutional support, and enhance the university's overall advancement capacity. In every respect, the opportunity demands a visible, strategic, and relationship-driven executive capable of translating vision into meaningful philanthropic impact.

Executive Strategy and Support

- Guide and support President Blake in his role as chief spokesperson and fundraiser, serving as an advisor and co-strategist in cultivating prospective donors and soliciting transformational gifts. Similarly guide and support senior leaders, volunteers, deans, faculty, and other key constituents in all development-related activities, ensuring that their time spent is productive, meaningful, and personally rewarding.
- Serve as an active member of the president's cabinet. Build collaborative professional relationships with peers and foster a strong team orientation. Work with a broad range of diverse individuals and groups, including senior executives, to realize and achieve shared goals.
- Participate in campus-wide strategic planning efforts and contribute to discussions that guide strategies and policies shaping GSU's future and impacting the future of Atlanta. Identify compelling major and principal funding opportunities within the university and match them with existing and potential donors.
- In conjunction with the president and senior leaders, develop clear, consistent, cohesive, and compelling messages about funding opportunities that leverage Georgia State's uniqueness, strengths, and aspirations, reflecting the university's excitement for its future direction and driving philanthropic support for various priorities.

Programmatic Design and Philanthropic Growth

- Assess the university's fundraising potential and craft a sophisticated, multi-year fundraising and engagement strategy that drives sustainable, long-term growth in philanthropic contributions, aligned with the mission, core values, and strategic priorities of Georgia State.
- Serve as architect, builder, and leader of a strategic and systematic program to broaden fundraising, outreach, and alumni relations activities, and increase philanthropic revenue year-over-year. Lead the successful public phase and conclusion of Georgia State's current campaign while preparing the university for future fundraising endeavors, ensuring an optimally deployed staff and an effective, efficient infrastructure that will support future successful endeavors.
- Evaluate, strengthen, and enhance existing individual giving (annual, major, principal, and planned and special giving), corporate and foundation relations and industry engagement programs, as well as athletics fundraising. Develop and implement new and innovative plans to systematically and strategically identify and acquire prospective individual and institutional donors; increase donor retention; and upgrade and renew existing donors.
- Capitalize on gains made during the current campaign, understand its success thus far, and recognize untapped opportunities. In continued support of the campaign, evaluate the philanthropic capacity of all constituencies, identify areas for growth, strategically augment development staff and resources, and craft fundraising strategies to raise sights and involvement of volunteers and donors at all levels.

- Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward a select prospect portfolio. Lead the frontline fundraising team by example, demonstrating success and ensuring that timely steps are taken toward solicitation.

Team Leadership

- Lead, support, and mentor GSU's advancement staff of nearly 100, promoting a culture of excellence, collaboration, and professional growth. Further develop a diverse and high-caliber staff that is well prepared to meet the ongoing challenges and opportunities of a first-rate advancement program.
- Set clear direction, priorities, and measurable goals for development professionals and administrative support personnel. Assess current staff effectiveness and overall organizational structure; create and nurture a culture of transparency, communication, and collaboration. Ensure that all staff members have a common commitment to advancing the university and its priorities.
- Promote excellence and an environment of achievement by placing staff members' work within the context of Georgia State's mission and strategic priorities. Work with staff members to set mutually agreed upon, well-defined, and measurable goals. Ensure that staff members execute effective management strategies that result in meaningful engagement and successful solicitation of prospects.
- Maintain a leadership style that is fair, equitable, open, and fluid, and one that is capable of inspiring, empowering, and motivating staff. Foster a work environment that recognizes and rewards performance, supports new ideas, builds confidence, encourages cooperation toward shared goals, promotes teamwork, reduces siloes, and retains staff.

Volunteer and Board Engagement

- Provide the highest level of support to volunteer leadership and the GSUF Board of Trustees for their activities on behalf of Georgia State. Ensure that their experience is meaningful, productive, and enjoyable, and that their intellectual and emotional connections to GSU and each other are strengthened.
- Assist President Blake and trustee leadership in the identification, recruitment, and cultivation of new trustee members, identifying potential key leaders with an affinity for the mission of Georgia State while building a volunteer structure that fosters a culture of philanthropy.
- Build capacity and volunteer engagement by identifying, tracking, and nurturing Georgia State's alumni, parents, and friends. Develop meaningful and strategic frameworks to leverage and mobilize volunteers and to raise sights and involvement with volunteers and donors at all levels.
- Ensure that Georgia State draws upon the skills and talents of its 300,000 alumni. Convey to volunteers that their service and support are valued. Create alumni programming and engagement opportunities that enhance and support the university's vision and aspirations.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This position requires strong leadership, exceptional judgment, superb communication skills, and the ability to work collaboratively with many internal and external constituencies. The VP will bring many of the following professional qualities and experiences:

- A deep appreciation for the mission, culture, achievements, and aspirations of Georgia State University as a student success-focused, urban public research-intensive university. The ability to articulate its uniqueness, relevance, complexity, and key economic and civic role in Atlanta.
- At least 10 years of sophisticated leadership experience across all advancement functions, within organizations of similar scale and complexity, including experience planning, leading, and closing comprehensive and capital campaigns.
- A demonstrated track record of impact and growth in prior organizations, translating knowledge to execution and results.
- Proven management skills in establishing a team- and goal-oriented environment that empowers staff through active communication, transparency, and delegation, and clarifies roles, builds confidence, sets clear goals and expectations, and celebrates achievements.
- The political savvy to navigate a complex academic community that includes a foundation and a 25-unit state university system; the ability to build bridges and collaborative relationships with all members of an operation across the university and a global base of alumni and constituents.
- A track record of success personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding principal gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations; a high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth benefactors.
- Exemplary interpersonal and listening skills, as well as the intellectual depth, maturity, and confidence to garner the trust of the President, Trustees, senior academic and administrative leaders, key volunteers, staff, alumni, and other constituents.
- A decisive and diplomatic consensus-builder who enjoys cross-departmental collaboration and leading by influence. The ability to create excitement around an institutional mission and encourage others to support the university.
- A sharp eye for operational efficiency and the best use of resources, including a demonstrated understanding of complex budgets and the ability to manage them.
- Superior written and oral communication skills; the ability to understand and translate information for all audiences clearly and compellingly.
- An understanding of and appreciation for the use of technology and data analytics to drive decision making.
- The flexibility to travel domestically and internationally and work evenings/weekends as required.
- Bachelor's degree required.
- Some experience working with university real estate and athletics preferred but not required.

LOCATION

Atlanta is integral to the Georgia State experience, offering students and faculty a vibrant urban environment in which to examine real-world challenges and pursue innovative solutions. As a leading business center, the city is home to one of the nation's largest concentrations of Fortune 500 companies, including Coca-Cola, The Home Depot, Delta Air Lines, AT&T Mobility, Chick-fil-A, and UPS, as well as more than 1,250 multinational corporations. Atlanta's appeal is strengthened by its highly educated workforce, with 45 percent of adults age 25 and older holding at least a four-year degree. Georgia State's location also connects students to many of the city's most notable cultural and historical attractions, including the Georgia Aquarium, Fox Theatre, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, the World of Coca-Cola, the Atlanta History Center, the Carter Center, and the High Museum of Art, while the Rialto Center for the Arts enriches campus life through acclaimed performances.

Athletics also play an important role, with Georgia State's Panthers competing in NCAA Division I and Atlanta supporting professional teams such as the Braves, Hawks, Falcons, and Atlanta United.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/georgia-state-university/vice-president-advancement>

Jack Gorman, Partner
Grace Zakim, Managing Associate
Christina Garrison, Senior Associate
Ryan Cheung, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Georgia State University is an equal opportunity employer with regard to veterans and individuals with disabilities and prohibits discrimination on the basis of an individual's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or protected veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Georgia State University. 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 Georgia State University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

ADDENDUM

About Georgia State (continued)

Georgia State's research enterprise has expanded significantly, supported by sustained growth in externally funded research and interdisciplinary scholarship that addresses pressing social, economic, and policy challenges. As one of only four R1 institutions in Georgia, the university plays a critical role in the state's research and innovation ecosystem, having invested over \$1.88 billion in research since 2014. In Fiscal Year 2025, the university earned over \$165 million in grants, which funded over 1,250 research projects.

Georgia State's identity is deeply intertwined with its urban setting. Its campus footprint and partnerships extend throughout downtown Atlanta and across the metro area, reflecting an institutional philosophy that views the university as part of the city rather than apart from it. The university maintains close relationships with local and state government, nonprofit and cultural organizations, and private-sector partners, and its continued growth through real estate development and adaptive reuse has made it a catalyst for economic mobility, workforce development, and community engagement.

As a public institution governed by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and subject to state and federal oversight, Georgia State operates within a governance and regulatory environment that is both complex and highly visible. This context shapes the work of the General Counsel, who plays a critical role in supporting the university's mission, protecting its interests, and enabling its continued success.

[Georgia State University Athletics](#) is home to a 16-team athletic department competing in Division I, the highest level of NCAA competition. The Georgia State Panthers are a full member of the Sun Belt Conference at the Football Bowl Subdivision level.

President M. Brian Blake

Dr. M. Brian Blake became Georgia State's eighth president in June 2021. During Dr. Blake's tenure, Georgia State has set several new milestones, including the launch of a visionary 10-year strategic plan. With its increasing reputation, the university received the largest number of applications ever for admission to its Fall 2023 entering class. In the same year, the research enterprise exceeded \$200 million in sponsored awards – the highest in history. Dr. Blake oversaw the acquisition of more than \$60 million in government support for a new 120,000 square foot Research Tower that will open in 2026. In Fiscal Year 2022, the university also raised a one-year amount of more than \$107 million in philanthropic gifts for the first time in history. An advocate for campus experience, Dr. Blake is leading the effort to establish new interconnected green spaces and enhanced facilities to activate the center of Georgia State's downtown campus.

Prior to Georgia State, Dr. Blake had over 25 years of faculty and administrative experience across five comprehensive research universities, including serving as provost at George Washington University and Drexel University, dean at the University of Miami, and associate dean for research at the University of Notre Dame. During the first 10 years of his academic career, he was professor and later department chair of computer science at Georgetown University. Dr. Blake serves on the Board of Directors for Grady Memorial Hospital Corporation, Metro-Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Junior Achievement of Georgia, and the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Kevin Lofton, MHA '79, Chair of the Georgia State Foundation (GSUF) Board of Trustees

GSU alumnus and distinguished healthcare leader Kevin Lofton (M.H.A. '79) was elected as chair of the GSUF Board of Trustees in 2024. Lofton, a J. Mack Robinson College of Business alumnus, a 2017 inductee to its Hall of Fame, and immediate past vice chair, joined the board in 2021 after a decorated career in healthcare administration. He retired in 2020 after serving as CEO of the Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health and its predecessor organization, Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), for 18 years. Under Lofton's leadership, CHI was transformed from a hospital company to an innovative, diversified \$29.6 billion healthcare entity with 137 hospitals and more than 1,000 care sites in 21 states.

Throughout his career, Lofton had a broad impact across the healthcare sector by helping to increase the ranks of healthcare executives and physicians from underrepresented groups and reduce care disparities in underserved populations. A former president of the National Association of Health Services Executives, Lofton received the organization's top honor when he was inducted into its Hall of Fame in 2022. He is a founding board member of the Institute for Diversity, a member of the Howard University Board of Trustees, and a former board member of the Morehouse School of Medicine and the Heersink School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Lofton also currently serves as an independent director for Gilead Sciences and Medtronic.

A 2017 recipient of the Georgia State Alumni Association's top honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award, as well as an inductee in the Robinson College of Business Hall of Fame, Lofton and his wife Sabrina Shannon endowed the Lofton Family Professorship in Robinson's Institute of Health Administration.

The Blueprint to 2033: Our Place, Our Time

In 2022, President Blake and the campus community unveiled Georgia State University's strategic plan, [*The Blueprint to 2033 – Our Place, Our Time*](#), which set a visionary pathway for the university to continue enhancing its academic excellence and student success, scholarship and creativity, and campus vibrancy. The plan emphasizes four pillars: [Identity, Placemaking & Belonging](#); [Innovating Research, Scholarship & Creative Activity](#); [Student Success 2.0](#); and [Beyond College to Career](#).

Georgia State University Foundation

The [Georgia State University Foundation](#) (GSUF) is a tax-exempt organization soliciting tax-deductible private contributions for the benefit of Georgia State University. It serves as an ambassador of Georgia

State University, supporting and assisting the university in achieving its mission through the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of gifts, and by collaborating and advising on activities that benefit and advance the university. GSUF is governed by 35 trustee and trustee emeritus members who participate in nine committees (executive, development, audit, finance, investment, nominating and governance, real estate, strategic planning, and women’s philanthropy network).

University System of Georgia

The [University System of Georgia](#) (USG) is a part of the community in each of Georgia’s 159 counties and provides services across the state. The USG is composed of 25 higher education institutions including four research universities, four comprehensive universities, nine state universities and eight state colleges. It also includes the Georgia Public Library Service, which encompasses approximately 389 facilities within the 61 library systems throughout the State of Georgia. Additionally, the USG includes the Georgia Archives which identifies, collects, manages, preserves and provides access to records and information about Georgia.

The University System of Georgia Foundation

The [University System of Georgia \(USG\) Foundation](#), established in 1995, supports all public colleges and universities in Georgia. The USG Foundation fosters philanthropy, manages assets, and provides leadership to ensure equitable access to higher education. By cultivating a culture of giving, the USG Foundation empowers institutions to support students and achieve their missions. The USG Foundation operates independently of the Georgia State University Foundation.