

Stanford University

Chief Athletics Development Officer
Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation
Stanford University

THE SEARCH

Stanford University seeks an entrepreneurial, strategic, and accomplished fundraising leader to serve as its inaugural Chief Athletics Development Officer (CADO). Reporting jointly to the Director of Athletics and to the Associate Vice President for Development, the CADO will design and execute the philanthropic strategy for the Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation (DAPER) at a defining moment in the history of American collegiate athletics — and in the history of Stanford’s own athletics enterprise.

Conference realignment, the implementation of the House settlement, and the introduction of direct revenue sharing with student-athletes have together rewritten the economics of college sports. Stanford has made an explicit institutional commitment to fund the new model through incremental athletics revenue and philanthropic support, with President Jonathan Levin emphasizing the university’s determination to extend its distinctive scholar-athlete tradition into this new era. Philanthropy is no longer one of several priorities for DAPER; it is the engine on which Stanford’s ability to compete — academically and athletically — at the very highest level will depend.

The CADO will lead a team of approximately 15 development professionals; partner closely with the Director of Athletics and the cabinet, with head coaches and senior administrators, with the Office of Development’s principal and major gift teams, and with university trustees and key volunteers; and build a donor pipeline capable of securing transformational, eight- and nine-figure commitments. The successful candidate will combine the discipline and donor-centered ethos of a sophisticated university advancement enterprise with the speed, public perception acumen, and high-stakes relationship management that big-time intercollegiate athletics demand.

Stanford has retained Jack Gorman of Isaacson, Miller, a global executive search firm, to assist in this important recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent in confidence as indicated at the end of this document.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1885 by Jane and Leland Stanford in memory of their son, [Stanford University](#) opened its doors in 1891 with a charge to “qualify its students for personal success and direct usefulness in life” and to “promote the public welfare.” Set on more than 8,000 acres in the heart of what is now Silicon Valley, the university has, in just over a century, become one of the most distinguished centers of teaching and research in the world.

Stanford comprises seven schools — Business, Doerr School of Sustainability, Education, Engineering, Humanities and Sciences, Law, and Medicine — and serves approximately 7,800 undergraduates and 9,400 graduate students taught and mentored by some 2,300 faculty members. Its alumni and faculty have founded thousands of companies, won dozens of Nobel Prizes, and helped shape virtually every field of modern science, scholarship, and creative endeavor. The university’s endowment, among the largest in American higher education, supports an academic enterprise of extraordinary depth and ambition.

Stanford’s ethos has long married rigorous intellectual excellence with the conviction that knowledge must be applied in service of the world. That same combination — uncompromising standards joined to a culture of practical impact — animates every part of the university, including its athletics program.

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND RECREATION

Stanford’s Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation is widely regarded as the premier intercollegiate athletics program in the country. The “Home of Champions” has captured 137 NCAA team championships — more than any other institution — and has brought home the Learfield Directors’ Cup in 26 of the 31 seasons in which it has been awarded, an unrivaled emblem of broad-based athletic excellence. Stanford women’s programs have won the Women’s Capital One Cup in four of the last five years.

Stanford’s commitment to broad-based excellence has also made the university one of the most consequential training grounds for Olympic athletes anywhere in the world. The Cardinal has produced at least one Olympic medalist in every Games in which the United States has competed since 1912, and Stanford-affiliated athletes have now captured more than 335 Olympic medals — including more than 160 gold — across nearly two dozen sports. At the 2024 Paris Olympics, Stanford sent a school-record 59 Olympians; won 39 medals, the most by any school at a single Games; and led all U.S. colleges and universities on the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee’s school leaderboard, with 37 student-athletes representing Team USA and contributing 36 medals to the American total. This sustained pipeline to the Olympic movement is a defining feature of the Stanford athletics enterprise, an important part of the case for support to alumni and donors who care deeply about the future of Olympic sport, and a powerful expression of the scholar-athlete model the Chief Athletics Development Officer will be charged with sustaining.

DAPER supports nearly 900 student-athletes competing on 36 varsity teams, together with the university's physical education, recreation, and wellness initiatives. Its culture, articulated as "The DAPER Way," calls on every member of the department to embrace scholar-athleticism, pursue and revere excellence, lead with courage, and work cohesively. Under the leadership of John Donahoe, the Jaquish and Kenninger Chair and Director of Athletics, DAPER is in the midst of a deliberate and ambitious reimagining of its operating model, designed to ensure that Stanford continues to compete at the very top of intercollegiate athletics in the ACC era while remaining unmistakably Stanford — academic first, broad-based, and principled.

Stanford's athletics facilities — Stanford Stadium, Maples Pavilion, Sunken Diamond, the Avery Aquatic Center, Cobb Track and Angell Field, the Taube Family Tennis Stadium, and the Arrillaga Family Sports Center, among many others — are concentrated on the historic central campus and represent one of the most complete athletic plants in the country. Sustaining and elevating these facilities, and the programs they house, will be a central element of the CADO's charge.

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Development (OOD) advances Stanford's mission by raising philanthropic support from alumni, parents, families, friends, and institutional funders. OOD is a highly collaborative, donor-centered operation with deep specialization across the university's schools, programs, and initiatives, and a long record of leading some of the most ambitious campaigns in American higher education.

The Athletics development team is part of OOD, and the CADO serves on OOD's Development Leadership Council. This structure ensures that athletics fundraising operates in close coordination with central principal gifts, major gifts, planned giving, donor relations, and development communications, and that DAPER priorities are reflected in Stanford's overarching philanthropic strategy. The CADO also serves on the Athletics executive cabinet, with full standing inside DAPER. The dual reporting line — to the Director of Athletics and to the Associate Vice President for Development — is intentional, and it signals the strategic importance of the role to both organizations.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF ATHLETICS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

As the chief development officer for DAPER, the Chief Athletics Development Officer is responsible for setting the strategic direction of, and producing the results from, Stanford's athletics fundraising program. The CADO leads a team of approximately 15 professionals across principal, major, and annual giving; donor engagement; and donor relations, and serves as Stanford's most senior fundraising voice for athletics — internally and externally.

Working in close partnership with the Director of Athletics, the Associate Vice President for Development, head coaches, senior administrators, OOD colleagues, the Stanford Alumni Association, the President's Office, and the Board of Trustees, the CADO will articulate compelling priorities and gift opportunities,

build sophisticated fundraising plans against them, and translate Stanford Athletics' ambitions into philanthropic results commensurate with the moment.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CADO

The Chief Athletics Development Officer will arrive at Stanford at a moment of genuine consequence and will be expected to make rapid, measurable progress against a defined set of opportunities and challenges:

Lead Stanford Athletics into the Post-House Era

The convergence of conference realignment, direct revenue sharing, expanded scholarships, and a dramatically more competitive recruitment environment has reset the economics of college sports. The CADO will be the architect of Stanford's philanthropic response — building the donor base, the case for support, and the gift pipeline that allow DAPER to sustain a 36-sport, broad-based program at the highest competitive level, while staying true to the scholar-athlete tradition that defines Stanford.

Build and Close a Portfolio of Transformational Gifts

Stanford's donor community is one of the deepest in American philanthropy, and Cardinal alumni and families have a demonstrated appetite for ambitious athletic investment. The CADO will personally cultivate, solicit, and close eight- and nine-figure commitments, lead the strategy for the program's most important relationships, and partner with the Athletics Director, President, and senior trustees in their highest-stakes donor conversations.

Lead, Develop, and Align the DAPER Development Team

The CADO inherits a talented team of approximately 15 professionals and will be charged with sharpening its focus, building out capacity where needed, deepening its bench, and ensuring it operates as an integrated, high-performing unit. The CADO will set clear goals, model donor-centered practice, mentor and stretch staff, and recruit selectively to bring in the additional firepower the post-House environment requires.

Partner Authentically with Coaches and Administrators

Athletics fundraising at Stanford depends on the credibility and engagement of the coaches and administrators whose leadership fuels donor enthusiasm and support. The CADO will be a trusted, candid, and highly effective partner to head coaches and senior DAPER leaders — bringing them into donor relationships responsibly, protecting their time, helping them tell their stories, and translating their priorities into fundable propositions.

Integrate Athletics Fundraising into the University's Philanthropic Strategy

Athletics, while distinct in audience and rhythm, is part of one Stanford. The CADO will work closely with the Associate Vice President for Development and OOD colleagues to ensure that DAPER priorities are reflected in the university's overall philanthropic agenda, that principal donors are stewarded coherently across their full Stanford engagement, and that athletics fundraising is fully integrated into the university's broader fundraising priorities and efforts.

Steward a Donor Community of Remarkable Scale and Prominence

Stanford Athletics enjoys the active interest of donors, trustees, and alumni whose expectations are exceptionally high and whose visibility is national. The CADO must combine outstanding political acumen with calm, disciplined judgment; be comfortable with the rhythm of game weekends, postseason runs, and media moments; and bring an unshakeable commitment to integrity, NCAA and ACC compliance, and Stanford's reputation.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Stanford recognizes that no single candidate will offer every desired quality in equal measure. The Search Committee welcomes candidates whose experience has prepared them for this role and who bring a substantial majority of the following:

- **A distinguished record in principal and major gift fundraising.** A demonstrated record of personally cultivating, soliciting, and closing eight- and nine-figure commitments, ideally in a complex research university, an elite intercollegiate athletics program, or a national nonprofit of comparable scale and visibility.
- **Strategic and operational leadership of a development enterprise.** Substantial experience leading and developing high-performing fundraising teams; setting and meeting ambitious goals; building infrastructure, pipelines, and metrics; and managing significant budgets in a complex organizational environment.
- **Sophisticated political and interpersonal acumen.** The judgment, presence, and emotional intelligence to operate effectively with university leaders, trustees, coaches, donors of great means and influence, faculty, and students, and to maintain the trust of all of them simultaneously.
- **A genuine affinity for intercollegiate athletics and the scholar-athlete model.** Comfort in the world of college sports — including its public visibility, postseason rhythms, and competitive intensity — paired with deep respect for Stanford's academic mission and for the integrity of the student-athlete experience.
- **Fluency in the post-House landscape.** A working command of the new collegiate athletics economy — conference realignment, revenue sharing, NIL, expanded scholarships, and the

regulatory environment — and a clear point of view about the philanthropic strategies most likely to succeed within it.

- **Collaborative instincts within a large, decentralized institution.** Demonstrated ability to operate across institutional boundaries; to work seamlessly with central advancement, communications, alumni relations, and the President’s and Provost’s offices; and to put the institution’s interests ahead of any single unit’s.
- **Superb written and oral communication skills.** The ability to articulate a compelling vision and case for support in donor meetings, board rooms, public remarks, and written communications; to listen as well as to speak; and to inspire confidence at first contact.
- **Unimpeachable integrity.** An unwavering commitment to ethical fundraising, NCAA and ACC compliance, donor stewardship, and the reputation of Stanford University.
- **Experience and education.** A bachelor’s degree is required; an advanced degree is welcome. The successful candidate will typically bring 15 or more years of progressively responsible experience in advancement or a closely related field, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Chief Athletics Development Officer is based on Stanford’s historic central campus in Stanford, California. The role is primarily on-site, with the flexibility appropriate to a senior leadership position and with regular travel and frequent presence at games, post-season events, and other after-hours functions.

Stanford offers a highly competitive compensation package. The anticipated base salary range is \$375,000 to \$450,000, with the precise offer determined by the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate, internal equity, and external market data. The position is eligible for performance-based incentive compensation and Stanford’s comprehensive benefits program. Stanford provides pay ranges as a good-faith estimate of what the university reasonably expects to pay; base pay is one component of a total rewards package detailed at cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards

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: [Chief Athletics Development Officer, Stanford University](https://isaacsonmiller.com/Chief-Athletics-Development-Officer-Stanford-University)

Jack Gorman, Managing Partner + Practice Leader

Nicole Poe, Managing Associate

Sandeep Kaur, Senior Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

Stanford University is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Consistent with its obligations under the law, the university will provide reasonable accommodation to any employee with a disability who requires accommodation to perform the essential functions of the job.

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

ADDENDUM: STANFORD LEADERSHIP

The Chief Athletics Development Officer will partner most closely with the following members of Stanford's senior leadership.

Jonathan Levin
President, Stanford University

Jonathan Levin, a distinguished economist and academic leader, became Stanford University's 13th president on August 1, 2024. A member of the Stanford faculty since 2000, he previously served as the Philip H. Knight Professor and Dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Business from 2016 to 2024, where he strengthened the school's position as a preeminent institution of management research and education while expanding financial aid and global and online programs.

Widely recognized for his scholarship in microeconomics and industrial organization, Levin's research has spanned incentive contracts, game theory, market design, e-commerce, and health insurance. In 2011, he received the John Bates Clark Medal, awarded to the American economist under the age of 40 who has made the most significant contribution to economic thought and knowledge. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a former Guggenheim Fellow, and a member of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. He served as chair of Stanford's Department of Economics from 2011 to 2014.

An alumnus of Stanford, Levin earned undergraduate degrees in English and mathematics in 1994, an M.Phil. in economics from Oxford University in 1996, and a PhD in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1999. As president, he has championed Stanford's scholar-athlete tradition and the university's commitment to competing at the highest level — academically and athletically — in a new era of collegiate athletics. He and his wife, Amy, a physician, have raised three children on the Stanford campus.

John Donahoe
Jaquish & Kenninger Director and Chair of Athletics

John Donahoe became Stanford University's eighth Director of Athletics on September 8, 2025, following his appointment by President Jonathan Levin after a national search. Appointed at a moment of historic change in collegiate athletics, Donahoe brings to The Farm a rare combination of executive experience, business judgment, and lifelong affinity for Stanford's scholar-athlete tradition.

Donahoe most recently served as Chief Executive Officer of NIKE, Inc. from 2020 to 2024, having joined Nike's board of directors in 2014. Earlier in his career, he served as President and CEO of ServiceNow and as President and CEO of eBay. He began his career at Bain & Company, where he rose to become Worldwide Managing Director. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board of PayPal and as a director of The Bridgespan Group.

A 1982 graduate of Dartmouth College and a 1986 graduate of Stanford's Graduate School of Business, Donahoe has been a longtime supporter of Stanford and its athletics mission. In announcing the appointment, President Levin noted Stanford's need for "a distinctive leader — someone with the vision, judgment, and strategic acumen for a new era of college athletics, and with a deep appreciation for Stanford's model of scholar-athlete excellence." Donahoe has described servant leadership as the north star of his career and has set as his charge ensuring that Stanford Athletics continues to lead — academically and competitively — in today's collegiate environment and tomorrow's.

Martin W. Shell

Vice President and Chief External Relations Officer; Interim Vice President for Development

Martin Shell serves as Stanford's inaugural Vice President and Chief External Relations Officer, reporting directly to the President. In this role, he leads and aligns the work of Stanford's externally facing functions, including the Office of Development, University Communications, Government Affairs, and Community Engagement, and works closely with the Stanford Alumni Association. He currently serves additionally as Interim Vice President for Development.

Shell joined Stanford in 1998 as Senior Associate Dean for External Relations at Stanford Law School, where he was later named Chief Operating Officer. He moved to the central Office of Development in 2003 as Associate Vice President, was appointed Vice President for Development by then-President John Hennessy in 2005, and led the office for 13 years. From 2006 to 2011 he served as executive vice chair and lead staff member to The Stanford Challenge, which secured \$6.2 billion in gifts and pledges from nearly 167,000 households — at the time the largest five-year fundraising effort in the history of higher education.

Earlier in his career, Shell held senior development roles at Hendrix College, his alma mater, and at the University of Arkansas, and worked in government and journalism in Arkansas and Washington, D.C. He is a trustee of Hendrix College, a former CASE Trustee, and the recipient of the CASE Crystal Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Amy Wilson

Associate Vice President and Campaign Director, Office of Development

Amy Wilson serves as Associate Vice President and Campaign Director within Stanford's Office of Development, providing strategic leadership for a portfolio of fundraising and engagement teams that includes Athletics development, development communications, donor relations, digital strategy, direct marketing, and annual giving. She is the cognizant Associate Vice President for the Chief Athletics Development Officer and will serve as the CADO's principal partner inside OOD.

Wilson is an experienced development executive with a track record across the breadth of advancement work — major and annual giving, donor relations, marketing and communications, prospect research and management, and reporting and analytics. She is recognized within the field as a data-driven strategist

with a particular gift for evaluating programs, designing innovative solutions, defining metrics, and securing the cross-functional buy-in that complex change requires. Earlier in her Stanford career, Wilson led direct marketing and The Stanford Fund, where she oversaw the university's widely noted decision to retire its outbound telefund program in favor of digitally led annual giving.

Wilson is a frequent contributor to the national advancement conversation and an active mentor of development professionals across Stanford and the broader CASE community.