



Director of Prospect Management and Research
Southern Methodist University
Dallas, Texas

THE SEARCH

Southern Methodist University (SMU) seeks a strategic, collaborative, and forward-thinking advancement professional to serve as its next Director of Prospect Management and Research. Reporting to Vice President for Development Services Chris Kollar, this position represents an outstanding opportunity to lead and further develop a critical function within an ambitious and rapidly evolving advancement enterprise. The Director will play an essential role in helping SMU identify, prioritize, and engage the prospects who will shape the university's philanthropic future while leading a talented and growing prospect development team.

Southern Methodist University is experiencing a period of extraordinary momentum and transformation. Under the leadership of President Jay Hartzell and Senior Vice President for Development and External Affairs Shontel Grumhaus, the university is making significant investments in its advancement infrastructure, organizational capacity, and fundraising talent. As SMU prepares for its next chapter of campaign planning and philanthropic growth, university leadership recognizes that sophisticated prospect development strategies, robust portfolio management, and data-informed decision making will be essential to achieving the university's ambitious fundraising goals.

At the center of this effort is a well-resourced prospect development function that serves as a strategic partner to advancement leadership, frontline fundraisers, and university administrators. The Director will oversee both prospect research and management, leading a team of seven professionals with the potential for continued growth as the advancement division expands. With responsibility for prospect identification, portfolio strategy, ratings and analytics, principal gift pipeline management, and fundraising intelligence, the Director will help ensure that fundraising resources are aligned with the university's highest-priority opportunities and most promising prospects.

The position arrives at a particularly exciting moment for SMU. As the university prepares for a future campaign expected to reach unprecedented levels of philanthropic ambition, leadership is seeking a seasoned development professional who can help translate institutional aspirations into actionable prospect strategies. Working closely with development and engagement leadership, the Director will play a visible and influential role in campaign planning, principal gift strategy, portfolio optimization, and the cultivation of a sustainable pipeline of transformational donors. As SMU transitions to Salesforce Ascend,

a next-generation CRM built specifically to optimize prospect development, research, and pipeline management, the incoming Director will play a pivotal role in shaping the university's data-driven fundraising strategies and maximizing this powerful platform's impact.

Beyond managing day-to-day research and prospect management operations, the Director will have significant opportunity to shape the future of prospect development at SMU. This individual will be empowered to evaluate processes, implement new approaches, strengthen fundraising partnerships, and further integrate research and prospect management strategies across the advancement enterprise. The successful candidate will inherit a talented, ambitious team eager for mentorship, leadership, and professional development and will have the opportunity to cultivate a culture defined by excellence, service, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The ideal candidate will be an accomplished prospect development leader who combines strategic thinking, operational expertise, and a deep understanding of fundraising. They will bring experience leading research and prospect management functions within a complex advancement organization, preferably in a campaign environment, along with the confidence and judgment required to serve as a trusted advisor to senior leaders. Most importantly, the successful candidate will be energized by the opportunity to build upon a strong foundation, elevate a high-performing team, and help position SMU for its next era of fundraising success.

Southern Methodist University has retained Jack Gorman of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this posting.

ABOUT SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

A nationally ranked private university located near the heart of Dallas, [Southern Methodist University](#) is a distinguished center for global research and teaching. SMU's more than 12,000 diverse, high-achieving students come from all 50 states and over 80 countries to take advantage of the university's small classes, meaningful research opportunities, leadership development, community service, international study, and innovative programs.

The university serves approximately 7,000 undergraduates and 5,000 graduate students through eight degree-granting schools: Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Cox School of Business, Lyle School of Engineering, Meadows School of the Arts, Simmons School of Education and Human Development, Dedman School of Law, Perkins School of Theology, and Mood School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. SMU is data driven, and its powerful supercomputing ecosystem – paired with entrepreneurial drive – creates an unrivaled environment for the university to deliver research excellence.

Now in its second century of achievement, SMU is recognized for the ways it supports students, faculty, and alumni as they become ethical, enterprising leaders in their professions and communities. [SMU's](#)

[relationship with Dallas](#) – the dynamic center of one of the nation’s fastest-growing regions – offers learning, research, social, and career opportunities that provide a launch pad for global impact.

Fundraising and Financial Overview

[The Office of Development and External Affairs](#) (DEA) comprises 147 professionals and supports Southern Methodist University by securing funding for university priorities; promoting meaningful involvement in the life and work of the university; heightening international, national, state, and local awareness of SMU; and supporting the enrollment of a diverse and able student body. In Fiscal Year 2026, SMU raised over \$300 million in philanthropic support.

From 2017 to 2025, [SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow](#) – the university’s campaign for impact – inspired an era of unprecedented advancement in academics, athletics, and national prominence. Thanks to more than 67,500 donors, volunteers, and supporters, the campaign exceeded its goal three years ahead of schedule, raising over \$1.656 billion and becoming one of the largest campaigns in the history of private Texas universities.

KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director will manage a team of research and prospect management professionals to support the major and principal giving initiatives of SMU. This leader will collaborate with President Hartzell, Senior Vice President Grumhaus, as well as with the Vice Presidents for Development and Engagement, for Principal Gifts, and for School and Project Development to guide and resource portfolios of prospects with giving potential for university transformational gifts (\$10 million-plus) and respond directly and promptly to their prospect inquiries. The Director will maximize team resources to ensure a vigorous prospect identification, rating, and research program capable of maintaining a pipeline of high-potential prospects in support of SMU’s personal solicitation teams. This individual will serve as a subject matter expert for the research and prospect management functions in the advancement function’s CRM, and for the Insight data warehouse and data visualization initiative. Critical to success will be the Director’s ability to enlist a well-developed national network of experts to ensure SMU’s development and engagement enterprise maintains best practices and an appropriately talented team in this vital area.

- Provide personal portfolio and research support to the President, SVP, and VPs in order to help maximize SMU’s fundraising results with the university’s highest potential fundraising prospects. Provide strategy recommendations regarding the assignment, alignment with funding initiatives, and moves management of the major and principal gift levels of the giving pyramid.
- Recruit, train, manage, and support a team of talented research and prospect management professionals appropriate to provide excellent support for one of the top 50 private university fundraising teams. Coach, mentor, and set priorities in a highly dynamic environment.

- Analyze the evolving information needs of the frontline fundraising team with regard to prospect and research management information and design, test, document, and support new capabilities in the CRM and reporting and data visualization tools. Engage with external resources to ensure current knowledge of new resources to extend SMU's capabilities.
- Participate in Apra, AASP, and other international organizations which position this role as a national leader in research and prospect management so as to aid in the recruitment of top talent, identification of training opportunities, and analysis of new trends and tools to drive the optimization of SMU's prospect potential appropriate to its nationally prominent level of results.
- Lead the strategic planning, annual plans of action, performance reviews, and budgeting required to align unit capabilities with the university's aspirations for fundraising. Collaborate with peers on the development services leadership team to identify and support cross-team opportunities.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- A minimum of seven years of relevant experience managing a team of research and prospect management professionals, preferably in a top-tier, private higher education setting. Comprehensive campaign experience is strongly preferred.
- Substantial experience in the research and prospect management areas of large-scale nonprofit CRM software and in prospect research software tools. Experience with Salesforce is preferred.
- Exceptional public speaking and presentation skills to successfully train and coach the fundraising team. Demonstrated knowledge about or the ability to understand and articulate ethics as defined in the Apra Statement of Ethics.
- The ability to lead, mentor, and motivate staff, and to encourage growth and change in both people and programs. A strong commitment to personal and professional development, and the ability to foster a collaborative and high-performing team environment.
- Solid skills in the Microsoft Office Suite. Knowledge of predictive modeling and data visualization software is preferred.
- Superb project management training and organizational skills. The ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously and with confidence and a sharp eye for operational efficiency.
- A strong commitment to confidentiality and professionalism. The capability to handle the university's most confidential information with discretion.
- Professional credibility, intellectual depth, maturity, and collaborative skills to garner the trust and confidence of the President and advancement leadership.

- The desire and ability to build bridges and strong collaborative relationships with all members of an operation.
- Impeccable attention to detail; superb follow-through; strong personal integrity, charisma, and work ethic coupled with a sense of humor and perspective.
- Bachelor's degree required; master's degree preferred.

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:

[Director of Prospect Management and Research, Southern Methodist University](#)

Jack Gorman, Partner
Grace Zakim, Managing Associate
Noa Boonin, Senior Associate
Lisa Clayton, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Southern Methodist University will not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, education activity, or admissions on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. SMU's commitment to equal opportunity includes nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

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

ADDENDUM

President Jay C. Hartzell

A nationally recognized university leader with extensive expertise in business education and research, President Hartzell began his tenure on June 1, 2025. He guides the university at a time of significant opportunity and growth, working alongside students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, and supporters to advance a bold new era of impact. Along with university leadership, President Hartzell championed a comprehensive listening effort during his first year on campus to better understand what makes SMU distinctive. Informed by perspectives from across the Hilltop and far beyond, the resulting strategic framework and plan reflect shared pride, confidence, and purpose while charting an ambitious path forward for the coming decade.

Before joining SMU, President Hartzell served as president of The University of Texas at Austin, where he led the university to record highs in applications, enrollment, graduation rates, research expenditures, and philanthropic support. His presidency followed more than 20 years on the faculty, including serving as dean of the McCombs School of Business, one of the nation's largest and most prestigious business schools. He began his academic career as an assistant professor of finance at New York University's Stern School of Business. A respected scholar, President Hartzell has published research in leading journals centered on corporate finance, corporate governance, and real estate.

Beyond campus, President Hartzell serves on the Dallas Citizens Council, the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas CEO Advisory Council, and the boards of MGIC Investment Corporation and Susser Bank. He previously served on the boards of Austin Habitat for Humanity and the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association, and earlier in his career worked as a consultant with Hewitt Associates. He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and economics (cum laude) from Trinity University and a PhD in finance from UT Austin.

Shontel Grumhaus, Senior Vice President for Development and External Affairs

Shontel Grumhaus joined SMU in March 2026 as Senior Vice President for Development and External Affairs. As a veteran development and fundraising executive, Grumhaus has more than 18 years of experience driving transformative philanthropy in higher education. At SMU, she is charged with translating bold ambition into tangible results, all for the betterment of students, research, and the community.

Before SMU, Grumhaus was Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Development and Chief Strategist for Schools and Units at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill), where she led advancement strategy across the university and managed a team of development professionals. Previously, she was Senior Associate Dean for Advancement at the Kenan-Flagler Business School, where she and her team surpassed a \$400 million campaign goal. The campaign included securing \$75 million to support construction of a new academic building, which was matched by an equal commitment from the

North Carolina Legislature. Prior to her time at Kenan-Flagler, Grumhaus oversaw the major gifts team for the College of Arts and Sciences. During her six-year tenure, she led a team that successfully launched a \$750 million campaign, significantly strengthening the college's fundraising capacity and long-term philanthropic pipeline.

An alumna of UNC Chapel Hill, Grumhaus holds a bachelor of science in business administration and a master of accounting.

Chris Kollar, Vice President for Development Services

Chris Kollar is the Vice President of Development Services at SMU, where he leads reporting & analytics, prospect development, records and gifts administration, donor relations, annual giving and advancement technology to support more than \$300 million in annual fundraising. With a career dedicated to bridging the gap between complex data systems and frontline fundraising goals, Chris has successfully guided major enterprise CRM migrations, modernized technology stacks, and built sustainable campaign infrastructures in higher education and healthcare. A Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) who frequently speaks on change management and technology, he holds a master's degree in behavioral sciences and a bachelor's degree in biology from North Carolina State University, where he also competed as a Division I student-athlete.