Santa Clara
UNIVERSITY

Vice President, University Relations

Santa Clara, California

THE SEARCH

Santa Clara University (SCU or Santa Clara), a distinguished, Jesuit Catholic institution of higher education located in the heart of Silicon Valley, seeks a strategic, creative, and mission-driven advancement leader to serve as its next Vice President, University Relations (VP). As a trusted thought partner to President Julie Sullivan, for whom advancing philanthropic success is a key priority, the incoming VP will build upon a strong foundation and leverage the deep affinity among the alumni community as the university elevates its advancement enterprise and aspires to even greater levels of excellence, visibility, and impact.

Joining Santa Clara at a pivotal moment in its history, the VP will work collaboratively with President Sullivan, the executive leadership team, the Board of Trustees, and other volunteer leaders, deans, athletics, faculty, staff, and alumni to advance an ambitious agenda to fulfill the institution's promise and potential to become the world's leading Jesuit university. Building upon the success and momentum of Santa Clara's recently completed, historic $1 billion campaign and fueled by the vision and aspirations set forth by *Impact 2030: Santa Clara University's Strategic Plan*, the VP will drive University Relations to new levels of accomplishment and effectiveness through strategically assessing and leveraging existing philanthropic strengths and opportunities, applying strong organizational acumen, and implementing the necessary enhancements and refinements to the existing infrastructure to sustain a high-performing, best-in-class program. Key charges for the VP include expanding the individual and institutional donor pipeline at all giving levels and broadening the donor base, both domestically and internationally; enhancing engagement and participation among alumni, parents, and friends; sustaining and developing the next generation of an active and successful cohort of volunteers; building and integrating technology, data analytics, and data-informed decision-making throughout the division; and readying the University Relations enterprise for future fundraising ambitions and endeavors.

The VP will play an important external role, bringing a thoughtful, energetic, and entrepreneurial approach to working in partnership with industry, community leaders, and donors. This individual will also identify opportunities to position President Sullivan to connect with philanthropists, entrepreneurs, and business leaders who are not currently engaged with the university, and maximize Santa Clara's existing relationships in the Silicon Valley region, nation, and world to philanthropic gain.

The VP will foster deeply productive and collaborative relationships with deans, senior faculty, administrators, and volunteer leaders, furthering the institution's culture of philanthropy. As a vital member of the President's Executive Council and Cabinet, the VP will contribute to and work closely with a team energized by several new university hires. The VP will be expected to provide meaningful input on the full range of issues facing the campus; hence, contemporary and comprehensive knowledge of higher education is highly desired. Critical to the VP's success will be the ability to retain and recruit talent, and to expertly lead, inspire, and mobilize approximately 150 professionals spanning alumni relations, events, and development within a cohesive enterprise that prides itself on collaboration, achievement, and commitment to mission. Current investment in university relations is underway, including the expansion of the frontline fundraising team.

This is an incredible opportunity for an accomplished and high-performing leader capable of building trust and generating excitement among the university's external and internal constituencies to galvanize philanthropic investment at all levels in order to unlock Santa Clara's full philanthropic potential. The successful candidate will be a highly ethical, self–assured, people- and results-oriented professional who appreciates and can leverage the power of the Bronco Family. The next VP will operate with a sense of urgency and humility, and will think strategically, analytically, and innovatively to transform Santa Clara's aspirational initiatives into executable and enduring programs. The VP must be a superb storyteller with extraordinary skills that include crafting multiple compelling cases for support, and engaging and building authentic relationships with the university's diverse community, connecting individuals not only to Santa Clara's history, but also to its ambitious future.

With at least 15 years of leadership experience in successful development operations, including a depth of experience working on billion-dollar-plus campaigns, the ideal candidate must possess a growth mindset; strong strategic planning, managerial, and motivational skills; a keen understanding of best practices in fundraising and a comprehensive knowledge of all major development and alumni relations functions; and a track record of significant personal success in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship at major and principal gift levels. The ideal candidate will have proven success navigating a division through change and leading staff through the process of setting and achieving annual and long-range fundraising goals to support institutional and campaign priorities. The successful VP will embrace, embody, and be able to compellingly articulate the mission and Jesuit identity of Santa Clara through visionary leadership, inclusive collaboration, and a dedication to educating the whole person. A bachelor's degree is required.

Santa Clara University has retained Rachel Ellenport 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 document.

ABOUT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1851, Santa Clara University is California's oldest institution of higher learning, with a 174-year tradition of educating the whole person for a life of service and leadership. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and just minutes from San José—one of the nation's fastest-growing and most diverse cities—the campus spans 106 acres of award-winning gardens and state-of-the-art facilities surrounding the Mission Santa Clara Church. Boasting a retention rate of 93 percent, one of the highest among national universities, Santa Clara offers a rigorous, contemporary education that fosters critical, creative, and reflective thinking to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world. *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Santa Clara 59th among national universities and among the top 25 schools nationally for its quality of undergraduate teaching. Santa Clara's strategic plan, Impact 2030, builds on the university's ascent as one of the nation's leading institutions of higher learning and centers around four strategic priorities for expanding institutional impact: reach on a global scale, solution for the universal good, opportunity for all talented students, and belonging for all Broncos.

Jesuit Catholic Tradition

With a widespread appreciation of the university's commitment to social justice and community engagement, the Jesuit Catholic tradition resonates across SCU students, staff, and faculty of all backgrounds. Rooted in the idea of educating the whole person, nearly every program on campus incorporates some aspect of Jesuit values, from the core curriculum and cultural immersion programs to interfaith dinner discussions and ethics workshops for local teachers. An appreciation for diversity and inclusion, including religious diversity, is central to the Jesuit tradition and SCU's values. The university's pedagogy emphasizes the four C's—competence, conscience, compassion, and community—and forms leaders who will build a just, human, and sustainable world.

Community and Programs

Santa Clara University has a total student population of approximately 9,500 students, including 6,508 undergraduates and 2,954 graduates, and is organized into six academic units: the College of Arts and Sciences, the Leavey School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Education and Counseling Psychology, the School of Law, and the Jesuit School of Theology. Santa Clara's three Centers of Distinction – Miller Center for Global Impact, the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics – represent tangible expressions of the university's Jesuit values, encouraging the pursuit of knowledge in service of humanity. At the heart of the university are its 1,150 dedicated staff members, and 756 full-time and 308 part-time faculty members, who are as committed to their students' intellectual and moral development as they are to pursuing research and scholarship. Santa Clara emphasizes small classes (11:1 student to faculty ratio) and a values-oriented curriculum, combining experiential learning and a nationally recognized teacher-scholar model. With a commitment to learning beyond the classroom, SCU provides vibrant residential communities, hands-on community learning, dynamic student life programs, and competitive Division I and recreational athletics.

Campus Leadership

Julie H. Sullivan, PhD

President Julie Sullivan was appointed the 30th president of Santa Clara University in 2022. She is both the first layperson and first female president since the university was founded in 1851 and embodies the conviction that the world needs Santa Clara graduates who will use their education, gifts, and talents to make the world a better place. Prior to joining Santa Clara, President Sullivan served as the president of the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota for nine years. A nationally recognized and distinguished professor of accounting and taxation, she has also held appointments as the executive vice president and provost of the University of San Diego and professor of business and accounting at both the University of California San Diego and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A native of Florida, President Sullivan is a first-generation college graduate with a bachelor's degree in accounting, a master's degree in taxation, and a PhD in business from the University of Florida.

Board Leadership

Santa Clara is governed by the Board of Trustees, a self-perpetuating, fiduciary body consisting of a minimum of 30 trustees but no more than 50. Larry Sonsini was elected chairman of the board in June 2021.

Members of the Board of Regents are a group of volunteers who provide special advice and support to the university's president and Board of Trustees, becoming ambassadors for the university in the community. Regents make recommendations on selected policy and operational issues, help the university generate resources, and represent the university in the community.

For over 59 years, the Board of Fellows has raised funds for the university, primarily for scholarships, through the annual Golden Circle Theatre Party. Over the years, the Santa Clara University Board of Fellows has grown from 35 to 175 members and has raised over $70 million for the university.

Financial and Fundraising Overview

For Fiscal Year 2026, Santa Clara University has an operating budget of approximately $544 million. In Fiscal Year 2024, the endowment was valued at approximately $1.5 billion. Santa Clara raises an average of $90 million annually in philanthropic support.

In 2019, the university publicly launched *Innovating with a Mission: The Campaign for Santa Clara University* with a goal of raising $1 billion by 2024 to expand access to a Santa Clara education and inspire students with new and innovative programs, buildings, and centers of learning. Santa Clara exceeded its $1 billion goal, with support from more than 46,000 donors. Of the just-over $1 billion raised, hundreds of millions of dollars are supporting student scholarships and financial aid; new STEM, residential, and arts facilities and programming; internships and experiential learning opportunities; and expanded athletic and collaboration spaces across campus.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Reporting to President Julie Sullivan and serving as an active and contributing member of her Cabinet and of the Executive Council, the VP will lead with vision and strategy, cultivating a vibrant culture of philanthropy, aligning fundraising initiatives with the university's strategic goals, expanding partnerships and sources of support, and strengthening engagement among alumni and friends of Santa Clara. Building upon the momentum of *Innovating with a Mission: The Campaign for Santa Clara University*, the VP will guide Santa Clara leadership in preparation for future fundraising endeavors.

The VP is also responsible for providing strategic vision and effective leadership for the 150-person university relations division. This individual will recruit, hire, train, and mentor staff, defining mutually acceptable annual and long-term performance goals; ensure an optimal organizational structure; and engage, educate, and otherwise support staff, faculty, volunteers, and senior leaders in their respective engagement and fundraising efforts. Leading by example, the VP will personally participate in the identification, cultivation, and solicitation of select, high-level donors and prospects. In addition to these formal duties, the VP will be an integral and visible member of the campus community, embodying the Jesuit values that make Santa Clara unique.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Assess the fundraising potential of the university and its academic and athletic units; serve as the architect in strengthening the university relations division to broaden fundraising outreach and constituent relations activities, in keeping with the strategic objectives and mission of Santa Clara.

- In conjunction with the president and her cabinet, develop clear, compelling messages around university relations that describe the strengths and aspirations of the university and its leadership. Disseminate that information both internally and externally in a way that excites and unites the community about Santa Clara's key philanthropic initiatives.

Leveraging Campus Leaders

- Guide and support the president in her role as chief spokesperson and fundraiser, serving as advisor and co-strategist in cultivating prospective donors, soliciting transformative gifts, and operationalizing bold new ideas that will lead Santa Clara to even greater levels of distinction.

- Partner closely with the president and provost to systematically engage deans, center directors, and faculty in the fundraising process. Provide deans and senior faculty with the resources and tools necessary to leverage the strength of their most successful alumni and donors in supporting the needs and aspirations of their academic units.

- In partnership with the president, systematically engage the athletic director and coaches in fundraising efforts, equipping them with the strategies, support, and tools to maximize philanthropic support for athletic excellence and student-athlete success.

- Cultivate strong working relationships with academic and administrative leaders across the institution; ensure that university relations is seen as a collaborative, accessible, proactive, and trustworthy partner capable of professionally addressing opportunities, concerns, and new ideas.

Volunteer and Board Engagement

- Provide the highest level of support to volunteer leadership and Board of Trustees, Board of Regents, and Board of Fellows members for their activities on behalf of Santa Clara. Ensure that their experiences are meaningful, productive, and enjoyable, and that their intellectual and emotional connections to Santa Clara and each other are strengthened.

- Assist the president and Board leadership in the identification, recruitment, and cultivation of new Board members, identifying potential key leaders with an affinity for the mission of SCU while building a volunteer structure that fosters a culture of philanthropy, particularly among new board members.

- Build capacity and volunteer engagement by identifying, tracking, and nurturing Santa Clara'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. Convey to volunteers that their service is valued, and their support is appreciated.

Donor Engagement and Programmatic Growth

- Capitalize on gains made during the previous campaign, understand its success, and recognize untapped opportunities. In preparation for future campaigns, evaluate the philanthropic capacity of all constituencies, identify areas for growth, and craft fundraising strategies to raise the sights and involvement of volunteers and donors at all levels.

- Direct a high-performing, donor-centric, transformational giving program, employing critical thinking and creative strategies aligned with institutional fundraising priorities.

- Serve as the key institutional liaison and strategist for high-capacity donors – independently or in collaboration with the appropriate university colleagues, as the situation requires – personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding a portfolio of principal and transformational prospects and donors.

- Expand and deepen connections with Silicon Valley's industry innovators and individual partners, harnessing Santa Clara's unique position in a global hub of creativity, entrepreneurship, and transformative opportunity.

Staff Management and Leadership

- Lead, inspire, and support an experienced team of university relations professionals to meet ongoing challenges and ambitious goals.
- Promote excellence through well-defined objectives for staff that are established in a collaborative manner to ensure that individuals have a sense of responsibility and ownership for viable outcomes, in partnership with the faculty and administrators they support. Utilize contemporary analytics to project, measure, and report on progress against goals.
- Serve as a resource for fundraisers in developing effective prospect strategies, execution of moves, closing with prospects, and stewardship. Lead by example, promote teamwork, and inspire others to action.
- Assess current staff effectiveness and overall organizational structure, identifying areas where restructuring and additional investment may be required; advocate for resources to adequately staff and support an ambitious strategy for university relations and compellingly articulate the return on investment.
- Maintain a leadership style that is fair, equitable, open, and fluid; empower and motivate staff through active communication and delegation, placing staff members' work within the context of the university's mission and strategic priorities.
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive work environment that recognizes and rewards performance, supports new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence and trust, promotes teamwork, reduces silos, and retains staff.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This position requires a strong and proactive leader who possesses exceptional judgment, high emotional intelligence, 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, commitment to, and personal embodiment of Santa Clara's Jesuit, Catholic educational mission, demonstrating values of intellectual excellence, social justice, service to others, ethical leadership, and care for the whole person, as well as the ability to effectively articulate and advance this mission through actions, relationships, and communications with both internal and external audiences.

- A minimum of 15 years of progressively responsible development leadership experience, ideally within higher education; experience serving on a senior leadership team and contributing at the strategic level; a demonstrated ability to plan, manage, and successfully conclude a comprehensive campaign at scale.

- Demonstrated ability and experience building upon an existing advancement program, resulting in a transformative increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization. Success with increasing the effectiveness of a development program and its staff through established objectives and performance standards.

- A track record of success to personally cultivate, solicit, and steward principal and transformational gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

- The credibility, emotional maturity, authenticity, and sound judgment required to effectively engage and leverage university leaders and volunteers in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of key prospects and donors.

- The political savvy to navigate a complex academic community; the desire and ability to build bridges and strong collaborative relationships with all members of an operation across a university with a diverse body of alumni and constituents.

- Ingenuity and creative problem-solving skills with strong critical thinking and analytic abilities; data-informed decision maker; impeccable attention to detail with superb follow-through; naturally curious and able to recognize connections and opportunities.

- Proven management skills in establishing a team- and goal-oriented environment; a history of recruiting, developing, and retaining top talent.

- Exemplary interpersonal communication skills; the ability to understand and translate information for all audiences adopting the university's message and voice; clarity, crispness, and elegance in writing and speaking. The ability to succinctly communicate a vision and process to

the president and other key constituents, appropriately utilizing data and metrics as a foundation for development programs.

- Knowledge of the application of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, to inform decision-making and drive philanthropic outcomes.
- A sharp eye for operational efficiency and the best use of resources, including a demonstrated understanding of budgets and the ability to manage them.
- The flexibility to travel domestically and internationally, and work evenings or weekends as required.
- Bachelor's degree required.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for this position starts at $650,000 and will ultimately be commensurate with experience. Santa Clara also offers excellent benefits, including health, dental, and vision insurance, as well as educational reimbursement and retirement contributions.

Nestled in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara, California is a vibrant city where innovation and community thrive side by side. Home to leading global technology companies and startups alike, Santa Clara embodies the entrepreneurial energy that defines the region. The city balances its high-tech identity with a welcoming, small-town feel, offering tree-lined neighborhoods, diverse cultural experiences, and a strong sense of civic pride. With its central location in the Bay Area, residents enjoy easy access to world-class dining, arts, and recreation, as well as proximity to San Francisco, San Jose, and the California coast. Steeped in history yet driven by innovation, Santa Clara offers an inspiring backdrop for education, business, and discovery.

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 below.

Rachel Ellenport, Partner
Nicole Poe, Managing Associate
Maureen Bogdan, Associate
Megan Gorman, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/santa-clara-university/vice-president-university-relations

EEO Statement

Santa Clara University is an equal opportunity employer. For a complete copy of Santa Clara University's equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policies, see https://www.scu.edu/title-ix/about/policies/

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