

# OHIO UNIVERSITY

## Associate Vice President for Donor Experience

### Leadership Profile

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## Executive Summary

Ohio University (OHIO) seeks a strategic and experienced advancement professional to serve as its next Associate Vice President for Donor Experience. As a nationally recognized public research institution with a Very High Research Activity (R1) designation and growing enrollment across all modalities, OHIO is well-positioned for continued momentum. This role offers an opportunity to help shape donor engagement at a university that has been repeatedly named the best-value public institution in Ohio.

Ohio University is home to nearly 300,000 living alumni worldwide, forming a large, multigenerational donor and volunteer community. Alumni reside across all 88 Ohio counties, all 50 states, and more than 100 countries, with the largest concentrations in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and growing communities in Florida and other national markets. The University secures more than \$50 million in philanthropic support each year, reflecting both the loyalty of its alumni and the strength of its advancement programs.

Ohio University continues to advance its refreshed mission and vision through Dynamic Strategy, a comprehensive institutional framework focused on access, student success, research excellence, and deep community engagement. With the arrival of Vice President for Advancement Greg Simmons in November 2024, a seasoned advancement leader with extensive campaign and engagement experience, the University is strengthening its advancement infrastructure and preparing to elevate donor engagement at scale.

The Associate Vice President for Donor Experience will serve as a central architect of this work. Leading donor relations, stewardship and gift administration, and advancement events, this leader will guide a comprehensive and coordinated donor engagement strategy that aligns with university priorities and reflects the interests of its supporters. The role calls for a thoughtful strategist who can design consistent, compelling donor communications, deliver modern, accessible impact reporting, and strengthen the systems and practices that support a seamless donor experience.

Working across a decentralized but collaborative campus, the Associate Vice President will partner closely with the AVP for Development, academic leadership, and frontline fundraisers to align stewardship, recognition, and engagement. This leader will elevate data quality practices, refresh donor societies and recognition programs, and guide a team committed to service, reliability, and clarity. Through this work, the Associate Vice President will directly enhance donor trust, increase participation, and support the University's long-term philanthropic goals.

With strong institutional momentum, a clear strategic direction, and a large, engaged alumni and donor community, Ohio University offers an exceptional opportunity for an advancement leader prepared to build a modern, relationship-driven donor experience at a nationally recognized public university.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see the Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this profile.

## Position Summary

The Associate Vice President will serve as the lead strategist for donor engagement, stewardship, and experience, designing and executing a comprehensive plan that cultivates meaningful relationships from initial contact through major and planned gifts. This work will center on fostering lifelong connections and demonstrating the impact of philanthropic involvement. In partnership with the AVP of Development, this role will drive collaborative strategies across major-giving, principal-giving, and stewardship programs to enhance the overall donor experience and strengthen engagement. Additionally, the AVP will act as a key liaison to university leadership and volunteer boards, offering strategic counsel and advancing initiatives that support the mission and vision of University Advancement.

This position provides oversight and integration of the Advancement Events, Stewardship and Gift Administration, and Donor Relations teams. The Advancement Events team will lead the creation of high-quality, multi-purpose events across in-person, hybrid, and online formats. Stewardship and Gift Administration will manage acknowledgment, reporting, and fund accountability, while Donor Relations will focus on deepening engagement with top-tier donors and volunteers. The AVP will evaluate priorities across these teams to align with university goals, build internal collaboration with university partners, and ensure consistent delivery of strategic, personalized donor experiences.

## Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the Vice President for University Advancement and CEO of Ohio University Foundation, the successful AVP will supervise a team of ten.

## Responsibilities

### Lead an Integrated Donor Experience Enterprise

- Provide clear and compassionate leadership for teams across donor relations, stewardship and gift administration, and advancement events, ensuring that each function works in harmony to deliver a consistent, personalized experience for donors and friends.
- Create an environment rooted in collaboration, trust, and service, where team members feel supported, connected, and inspired to do their best work.

### Strengthen Relationships with Donors and the Broader Community

- Champion meaningful engagement with alumni, donors, foundations, and corporate partners, helping them understand their impact and deepening their sense of connection to Ohio University.
- Ensure that outreach, recognition, and stewardship practices reflect care, authenticity, and the University's commitment to lifelong relationship building.

### Guide Strategy and Operational Excellence

- Shape and implement strategies that advance the University's philanthropic goals, anchoring decisions in institutional priorities and donor needs.
- Evaluate and refine policies, systems, and workflows to create clarity, reduce complexity, and elevate the overall donor experience.
- Navigate challenges with creativity and independence, serving as a trusted partner to senior leadership in solving institution-wide issues with long-term impact.

## Develop and Empower Teams

- Lead and mentor team members across donor relations, stewardship, and events, with responsibility for hiring, coaching, performance management, and organizational structure.
- Build a culture where people thrive by prioritizing transparency, professional development, and mutual accountability.

## Steward Resources with Care and Accountability

- Oversee significant budgets for donor engagement, recognition, and events, ensuring that investments align with strategy and reflect responsible fiscal management.
- Make informed and forward-looking decisions that support sustainable growth and reinforce donor trust.

## Advance the University's Mission Through Strategic Partnerships

- Collaborate with Advancement, academic units, and campus partners to align engagement opportunities, recognition standards, messaging, and donor touchpoints.
- Represent the donor experience perspective in institutional conversations, helping translate University priorities into compelling and donor-centered action.



## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

Building on the momentum at OHIO, the next Associate Vice President for Donor Experience will undertake the following responsibilities.

### **Align the donor experience with institutional momentum and future campaign ambitions**

With renewed leadership and a growing focus on strategic clarity, Ohio University is preparing for its next era of philanthropic aspiration. The Associate Vice President will play a vital role in ensuring that donor communications, stewardship, and events create the connective tissue between institutional priorities, academic excellence, and the generosity of alumni and friends. By building a cohesive and emotionally engaging donor experience under Greg Simmons leadership, the University will strengthen confidence, expand its donor pool, and set the stage for sustained growth in giving.

### **Develop a comprehensive donor experience strategy that inspires lifelong commitment**

The Associate Vice President will design a holistic plan that connects first-time participants to principal and planned gift donors through purposeful touchpoints that reflect the spirit and mission of a public research university. The plan will define shared standards and pathways for colleges and units while honoring a collaborative and decentralized campus culture. The strategy will prioritize clarity of message, meaningful recognition, and consistent personalization so that every interaction reinforces why philanthropy matters at Ohio University.

### **Modernize stewardship and impact reporting to build trust and excitement**

The role will lead the evolution of donor acknowledgments, fund reporting, and impact communications so that donors receive timely, accurate, and emotionally resonant updates. A priority will be transforming endowment reporting into accessible, visually compelling digital formats that make outcomes easy to understand and share. This modernization will remove operational burden from fundraisers and will enable leaders to communicate progress with confidence.

### **Elevate engagement by partnering closely with the Vice President for Advancement**

Working in direct partnership with Greg Simmons, the Associate Vice President will translate institutional priorities into donor-facing experiences that amplify visibility, deepen relationships, and accelerate the pathway to major and principal gifts. This partnership will align events, communications, and volunteer strategies so that the donor journey is fully integrated with campaign readiness and future campaign execution. The collaboration draws upon Simmons's experience leading comprehensive advancement programs that exceeded campaign goals and strengthened alumni engagement.

### **Expand donor acquisition and participation while nurturing multigenerational affinity**

Ohio University's alumni and friend communities are passionate and multigenerational. The Associate Vice President will help design scalable journeys that welcome new donors, celebrate emerging leaders, and cultivate households with a tradition of giving. Signature engagement moments, both digital and in person, will be crafted to resonate in key geographies and create momentum measured by participation rates, pipeline growth, and lifetime giving behaviors.

**Build a data-informed engagement enterprise with clear standards and governance**

Success requires reliable data, shared definitions, and actionable insights. The Associate Vice President will collaborate with the Office of Data Analytics and Strategy to implement data quality benchmarks and operationalize governance that improves list integrity, parent and household data, and the accuracy of donor preferences across systems. The position will utilize dashboards and reporting cadence to guide decision-making, to inform personalization, and to continuously improve the donor journey.

**Create event experiences that showcase impact and accelerate philanthropy**

The portfolio will produce a calendar of experiences that bring donors and volunteers into the life of the university and that highlight the transformational effect of philanthropy on students, faculty, programs, and places. Each event will have defined objectives, audience strategy, and post-event follow-up that converts enthusiasm into engagement and giving. The approach will leverage campus partnerships and leadership participation to reinforce alignment and to tell the most compelling stories from across Ohio University.



## Candidate Qualifications

### Required Skills & Experiences

- A master's degree in a related field and extensive professional experience (typically 15+ years), including supervisory experience (typically 9+ years), or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

### Desired Knowledge and Work Experience

- Experience in higher education is strongly preferred, particularly within decentralized academic environments.
- Experience working across donor relations, stewardship, events, communications, and data-informed engagement is highly valuable.

### Leadership Skills and Competencies

- Demonstrated ability to work directly with senior and executive leadership across a large, complex institution.
- Ability to operate independently, set priorities, and lead multiple teams with clarity and accountability.
- Ability to design and implement donor engagement and stewardship strategies that improve communications, recognition, impact reporting, and acquisition.
- Skill in navigating complex operational and data challenges, with the ability to improve systems, processes, and workflows across units.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to translate impact and support consistent messaging across a decentralized campus.
- Demonstrated success in building and sustaining high-performing teams and fostering a collaborative, service-oriented culture.

### Location

This position is based on the Athens, Ohio, campus and follows the University's hybrid work model. After a preliminary onboarding period on the Athens campus, the successful candidate is expected to work on either the Athens or Dublin campus three days per week, with the option to work from other locations on the other days.



## About Ohio University

### Overview

As the state's oldest public university, Ohio University has long been a regional and state leader in preparing students for successful careers. Ohio University's total enrollment is over 30,000 students, including almost 1,000 international students from 102 countries. Approximately 20,000 students from Ohio are studying at the residential campus in Athens, a quintessential college town nestled deep in the Appalachian foothills of beautiful Southeast Ohio.

Founded in 1804 and guided by world-class faculty members, Ohio University is home to more than 250 academic programs across a wide range of fields, including business, communications, healthcare, medicine, social sciences, the arts, and STEM. The University's focus is on ensuring student success through access to real industry and research experiences at an affordable cost, which is why Ohio University is ranked the No. 1 Best Value public university in Ohio, according to U.S. News & World Report.

The University's success in developing student potential is due to the richness of student-faculty engagement and the synergistic relationships between its exceptional undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The University leverages its partnerships and the knowledge generated from research and scholarly activities to enhance classrooms, learning communities, centers of excellence, guided research, artistic endeavors, and experiential academic opportunities.

The main campus of Ohio University is in Athens, Ohio, with five regional campuses (Chillicothe, Eastern, Lancaster, Southern, and Zanesville), as well as additional extension campuses in [Dublin](#) and [Cleveland](#), and numerous competitive online programs. OHIO has 12 colleges offering over 250 academic programs, including over 130 master's and 35 doctoral programs. In addition, OHIO offers more than 50 online programs, including certificates, associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. More than 3,750 students are served by the regional campuses; approximately 5,700 students are in fully online programs, and nearly 1,000 are medical students in the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine.

OHIO students and alumni strive to make a difference in the world. Ohio University students consistently receive nationally competitive awards, such as the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, with 202 recipients since the program's inception in 1946. For six consecutive years, Ohio University has been awarded the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award.



OHIO is uniquely positioned to provide a variety of services and programs to the southeastern Ohio Appalachian region. The University consistently ranks among the nation's highest-performing public universities in terms of actual versus predicted graduation rates, reflecting the remarkable depth and breadth of student-faculty engagement. Because of the level of the faculty's commitment to student success, OHIO's graduate and undergraduate programs, regional education, and outreach initiatives make substantial contributions to the furtherance of civic engagement and service in the realms of communication, the environment, technology, health and wellness, fine arts, and the liberal arts and sciences.

For more information about OHIO, please see the University's Office of Institutional Research [Factbook](#), the [Budget Book](#) in the Office of Finance, or visit [www.ohio.edu](http://www.ohio.edu).

## Mission and Vision

Ohio University's mission and vision statements encapsulate the University's purpose and goals. They also play an important role in defining the ties that link all members of our university community.

**Mission Statement:** To hold the door open to higher education so that all those eager to solve humanity's most urgent challenges might enter to learn, connecting them with experiences and discovery that will help make them think critically, care deeply, lead boldly, and ultimately depart to serve.

**Vision Statement:** To deliver the most valuable university education in Ohio, and lead as one of the most valued public universities in the nation.

## Academics

Ohio University's degree-granting colleges serve as the home of academic departments, schools, and centers that deliver diverse programs, degrees, and majors. Each college has a unique community and culture that supports each student's specific personal, academic, and professional goals.

## Colleges

- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)
- [College of Business](#)
- [College of Fine Arts](#)
- [Graduate College](#)
- [College of Health Sciences and Professions](#)
- [Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine](#)
- [Honors Tutorial College](#)
- [The Patton College of Education](#)

- [Russ College of Engineering and Technology](#)
- [Scripps College of Communication](#)
- [University College](#)
- [Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service](#)



## About the Division of University Advancement

The Division of University Advancement tells Ohio University's story and champions its mission and vision across the region, state, nation, and world. With the generous help of donors and alumni, the Division enriches University life by building relationships and securing private support that transforms lives and makes excellence possible. The Division is comprised of more than 80 staff members across all development disciplines, alumni relations, and foundation management.

### The Ohio University Alumni Association

Since 1859, the Ohio University Alumni Association (OUAA) has actively engaged alumni and friends with the University – connecting grads to alma mater in support of students, faculty, staff, and programs. Established to serve and engage alumni long after graduation, the Association offers a robust network for career development, lifelong learning opportunities, and philanthropy. As a core pillar of the University's advancement efforts, the Association is supported by a dedicated alumni relations team headquartered at the Konneker Alumni Center on the Athens Campus, working collaboratively with college-specific alumni networks to strengthen the Bobcat community across the globe.

The OUAA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, ensuring strong alumni representation in its leadership. It serves a vast network of nearly 300,000 passionate alumni worldwide, recognizing their achievements through prestigious awards like the Medal of Merit, presented to those who excel in their chosen fields, and the Distinguished Service Award, honoring alumni who give back significantly to the University.



### The Ohio University Foundation



The Ohio University Foundation was established in 1945 by supporters of Ohio University, including and encouraged by then-President John C. Baker. The Foundation is an institutionally related, nonprofit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization, and is the repository for all private gifts to Ohio University through annual giving programs, capital and special campaigns, and planned or deferred gifts such as bequests and trusts. Contributions to the Ohio University Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Private philanthropy has had a rich and dramatic impact on Ohio University from as early as 1816, when Christopher and Daniel Herrold forgave the debt for the lumber used to build Cutler Hall, to several more recent capital campaigns. Gifts from generous donors have provided scholarships and financial aid packages, research and faculty development, capital expansion and renovations, technology upgrades and lab equipment, library acquisitions, and vital unrestricted support, allowing Ohio University to meet unexpected challenges.

To view the list of the current members of the Ohio University Foundation's Board of Trustees, please click [here](#). To see the University and the University Foundation's annual financial reports, please click [here](#).

## Leadership

### Lori Stewart Gonzalez University President



President Gonzalez joined Ohio University from the University of Louisville, where she served as Executive Vice President and Provost. She has served as an academic leader in both urban and rural environments, always in public higher education.

Dr. Gonzalez received her Bachelor of Arts degree in speech pathology and audiology from the University of Kentucky and her Master of Arts degree in communication disorders from Eastern Kentucky University. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Florida and is an accomplished researcher and faculty member in her field, having taught at the University of Southern Illinois and the University of Kentucky, where she has taught for more than a decade.

She began her academic career at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1988. In 1991, she returned to the UK as an assistant professor in the Communication Sciences and Disorders program. She then spent 20 years in roles as a professor and associate dean of Academic Affairs. In 2005, she was appointed dean of the College of Health Sciences, a position she held for seven years. In 2011, Dr. Gonzalez moved to Appalachian State University, where she served as provost and executive vice chancellor for three years, followed by a year as special advisor to the senior vice president for Academic Affairs at the University of North Carolina System. From 2015 until the spring of 2021, she served as the vice chancellor for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. In April of 2021, Dr. Gonzalez was appointed executive vice president and university provost at the University of Louisville, followed by a one-year term as interim university president.

### Greg Simmons Vice President for University Advancement and CEO of Ohio University Foundation



Greg Simmons is the Vice President for University Advancement and the President/CEO of The Ohio University Foundation. In this capacity, he serves as the chief advancement officer for the university and provides leadership for Ohio University's comprehensive fundraising and alumni engagement programs, comprised of 70 professional staff and a budget of more than \$14 million. The Ohio University Foundation manages philanthropic contributions and investments on behalf of the university. The Foundation manages assets of \$1.5 billion, including the university's \$940 million endowment.

Before arriving at Ohio University, Simmons served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), from 2008 to 2024. At UMBC, he led the launch and completion of the university's largest-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign. He was also responsible for bwtech@UMBC, the university's 500,000 sq ft research and technology park that at the time housed more than 120 start-up and emerging technology companies.

Simmons earned a master's degree in public policy from UMBC and a bachelor's degree in English/Writing from Loyola College in Maryland. Simmons lives in Athens with his wife Angela and has sons currently enrolled in undergraduate programs in Maryland and Vermont.

## Community

University Advancement plays a vital role in advancing Ohio University's mission, supporting students, faculty, research, and community impact. Team members live and work across Southeast and Central Ohio, including Athens, Columbus, and Dublin, communities that offer a strong quality of life, professional opportunities, and cultural vibrancy.

### Athens, Ohio



Athens is home to Ohio University's historic main campus and offers a welcoming, community-focused environment that blends the charm of a quintessential college town with the cultural and natural beauty of Southeast Ohio. Consistently ranked among the "50 Best College Towns to Live in Forever," Athens is known for its vibrant local food scene, strong arts community, and access to exceptional outdoor recreation. The surrounding Appalachian foothills provide an abundance of hiking trails, state parks, and scenic landscapes, creating an ideal environment for those who value both community and nature.

Athens provides:

- A lively arts and cultural scene, supported by galleries, music venues, theaters, and festivals.
- Outdoor recreation across state parks, wooded trails, and bike paths throughout Southeastern Ohio.
- A community rich in history, activism, and civic engagement, with longstanding traditions of sustainability and regional service.
- An accessible cost of living and a family-friendly atmosphere.

To learn more, visit: <https://athensohio.com/>.

### Columbus and Dublin



Ohio University also maintains offices in Columbus and Dublin, expanding the opportunities for donor, alumni, and partner engagement across Central Ohio. These communities provide easy access to the largest metropolitan region in the state and offer a dynamic mix of professional, cultural, and lifestyle advantages.

Columbus is approximately 75 miles northwest of Athens (about 1 hour and 15 minutes by car). As Ohio's capital and one of the fastest-growing cities in the Midwest, Columbus offers a robust economy, vibrant neighborhoods, and a diverse cultural scene. The city is home to major employers, thriving arts districts, and well-known culinary and entertainment offerings.

Dublin, located just outside Columbus and approximately 85 miles from Athens, is a rapidly growing community known for its high quality of life, strong corporate presence, and walkable, modern urban center. Its proximity to Columbus provides access to metropolitan amenities while offering a smaller-community feel.

After an initial onboarding period on the Athens campus, the Associate Vice President for Donor Experience may work part of the week from Columbus or Dublin under Ohio University's hybrid work model.

## Procedure for Candidacy



All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. *Please do not add photos or reference contacts to your application materials.* Review of applications has begun and will continue until the position is filled.

Please submit all applications, nominations, and inquiries to the WittKieffer consultants, Ashley Buderus and Jevon Walton, through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#). New users should select “**Register Here**” to create an account before proceeding. After logging in, navigate to “**Open Positions**,” then locate the role by entering the institution’s name and clicking the search wheel.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can also be directed to the WittKieffer consultants assisting OHIO with this recruitment via e-mail to [evogelsang@wittkieffer.com](mailto:evogelsang@wittkieffer.com).

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Associate

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Ohio University offers a robust and flexible benefits program to support the health, financial well-being, personal development, and life balance of our faculty and staff.

Ohio University is proud of its rich history, and as part of our ongoing efforts to provide and support a transformative learning experience, we affirm our commitment to fostering a welcoming and respectful workforce and community. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration free from discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, military service or veteran status, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, status as a parent or foster parent, or any other bases under the law. Ohio University is an equal access/equal opportunity employer.