THE SEARCH

Michigan State University (MSU), a leading global research university, seeks a mission-driven, aspirational, collaborative, and innovative executive leader to serve as its vice president for university advancement. The next vice president will join MSU at a key inflection point in which the university prepares for transformational growth. Under the new leadership of President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., MSU completed a strategic planning process in September 2021, from which the next vice president will build and lead the planning, preparation, launch, and execution of a comprehensive fundraising campaign. This is an exceptional opportunity to partner with a new, evolving, and fundamentally collaborative university leadership team and to play a central role in enhancing the visibility and aspirations of an outstanding institution with a deeply loyal alumni base and a profound commitment to excellence, equity, and impact.

Founded in 1855, MSU is a premiere land-grant university, and an innovator in research, teaching, and application of knowledge. The university was established to make higher education broadly available for the benefit of the public good and served as a model for the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act of 1862. MSU has evolved into a world-class university, offering a full spectrum of programs, and attracting gifted professors, staff members, and students. The university is part of the Big Ten Conference and since 1964 has been one of 66 members of the prestigious Association of American Universities. As one of the top research universities in the world, Michigan State’s trailblazing spirit and continued commitment to its core values of excellence, diversity, inclusion, and connectivity are stronger than ever.

Reporting directly to President Stanley, the vice president will be responsible for designing and executing a comprehensive, integrated advancement (development and alumni affairs) strategy and infrastructure, with a goal of building the best culture of engagement and philanthropy of any major public university in the country. The vice president will work with the president and senior leadership to maximize their success, serving as the principal advisor on advancement at MSU and guiding the cultivation of highest-level donors. The successful candidate must also be prepared to position MSU to respond to the evolving nature of philanthropy, and to engage the university’s growing, multi-generational, and increasingly diverse alumni and parent populations both deeply and strategically. The vice president will guide a division of more than 300 staff and a budget of $36 million.
As a member of the president’s executive team, the vice president will be expected to provide meaningful input on the full range of issues facing the institution, and thus a person with a contemporary and comprehensive knowledge of higher education is much desired. The next vice president must also demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion—engaging and supporting individuals of varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives and ensuring an environment that is vibrant, welcoming, respectful, and safe for all. The vice president will be a person of integrity, with a deep understanding of and passion for the mission, goals, people, and culture of Michigan State University.

Success for the next vice president will be, in part, defined by the ability to lead and inspire the team to meet aggressive goals and develop strategies to educate and engage all members of the university community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and senior administrators—in advancement efforts. This leader will address a wide range of opportunities and challenges to enable MSU to meet its aspirations, including but not limited to the following:

- Advancing MSU’s impact and commitment to excellence by growing its philanthropic resources;
- Expanding the donor pipeline and broadening engagement to unengaged, underrepresented, and next generation alumni and prospects;
- Enhancing coordination between and among central and unit-based advancement programs, as well as between development and alumni affairs functions;
- Optimizing and strengthening internal processes, systems, and structures, including data and stewardship;
- Bolstering infrastructure to support increased philanthropic revenue and future fundraising efforts, including planning, launching, and executing a comprehensive fundraising campaign.
- Fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration across the advancement division, ensuring each member is enabled to professionally develop and achieve their goals;
- Unifying unit priorities with university goals that result in transformational support;
- Leveraging MSU’s growing philanthropic potential within the health sector, foundations, and corporations who can be engaged through public-private partnerships;

The successful candidate will be an open and inclusive communicator and collaborator who advocates for partnership, transparency, accountability, respect, and a donor-centric culture of philanthropy. The next vice president must promote a culture of positive change and innovation, encouraging team members to take calculated and data-informed risks. This person will be a successful leader and manager, who has delivered results at an institution of similar complexity, and who will bring a depth of campaign experience and a track record of significant personal success in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship at principal gift levels.

A minimum of 15 years of leadership experience in advancement, constituency engagement, and staff management is required, as is a knowledge of strategies employed in all major development and alumni affairs functions. The vice president must be able to create a metrics-driven, financially prudent, and results-oriented work environment that promotes collaboration and achievement. Experience leading all aspects of a complex team, including managing, mentoring, motivating, positioning, retaining, and evaluating staff is essential. Demonstrated experience enhancing professional development and career planning opportunities for advancement staff as a means of retention is highly desirable. A bachelor’s degree is required.
Michigan State University has retained Jack Gorman of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in conducting this important search. Inquiries, applications, and nominations for this position should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY

Michigan State University is a top 100 global research university renowned in certain disciplines and well positioned to lead in others. The university is a global leader in areas ranging from Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) to social science to the arts and humanities, with nuclear physics, plant and soil sciences, K-20 education, supply chain and logistics, and communication and media receiving sustained recognition. African history, organizational psychology, criminal justice, veterinary medicine, biomedical research, and a suite of environmental sciences are among the areas of national and international prominence. Other areas, such as mobility, entrepreneurship, ethics, digital humanities, and African American and African Studies are rapidly emerging as new spirals of excellence. These lists are by no means exhaustive, but they suggest the breadth of contributions of MSU researchers, scholars, and practitioners at the highest level.

The university offers an outstanding educational value that provides pathways to opportunity. Washington Monthly’s 2021 ranking of national universities, based on contributions to social mobility, research and promoting public service, places MSU No. 21 in the nation among public universities. And for its “best bang for the buck” category, MSU ranks No. 21 among colleges and universities in the Midwest—public and private—for helping non-wealthy students earn a marketable degree at an affordable price. Placing another lens on return on investment, U.S. News & World Report notes MSU’s graduation rate is 9 percent higher than expected given students with similar test scores and economic background.

Michigan State enrolls nearly 50,000 students, including 11,000 graduate and professional school students; employs more than 12,500 faculty and staff members; and a general fund operating budget of $1.4 billion for fiscal year 2021. MSU’s students come from all eighty-three counties in Michigan, each of the 50 states, and more than 125 other countries. Students of color comprise 23.7 percent of the student body, and international students, 8.3 percent. MSU has over 510,000 living alumni worldwide.

The 5,632 MSU faculty and academic staff members are the driving force behind the university’s growing reputation as a national leader in scientific research and development. A significant number have received national and international recognition, including membership in the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Education, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Many have received Dreyfus, Fulbright, Guggenheim, MacArthur, Sloan, GRAMMYs, and other awards. In each of the past three years, the university received more than $700 million in external funding for research in food safety and security, human and animal health, energy, education, defense, international development, social and behavioral sciences, digital humanities, and other areas. Arts and other creative pursuits are also a vital part of the Michigan State experience and in October 2021, the university opened the 37,000-square-foot state-of-the-art Billman Music Pavilion. A $41.5 million project, the new space garnered more than $17.8 million in private philanthropy.

MSU’s East Lansing campus boasts 564 buildings, including 107 academic buildings, spread across 5,200 acres including 2,100 acres in existing or planned development. The university owns approximately 21,000 additional acres throughout Michigan for supporting teaching and learning, research, and outreach and
engagement. MSU offers students some 400 programs of undergraduate, graduate, and professional study. The university has emerged as a leader in global education and ranks in the top ten for study abroad participation and international student enrollment. It also ranked No. 25 among large schools on the Peace Corps 2019 Top Volunteer-Producing Colleges and Universities list.

Location

East Lansing is a safe, attractive, and affordable place to live and work. It has the vitality, diversity, and culture of a university town, mixed with affordable housing, strong public schools, and accessible amenities. East Lansing has nearly 50,000 residents and is adjacent to Michigan’s capital in neighboring Lansing. The campus is approximately 90 minutes from Detroit, and roughly one hour from both Grand Rapids and Flint, two metropolitan areas where the university has a significant presence and interest. Michigan residents enjoy four distinct seasons, the country’s longest freshwater coastline, and more than 11,000 inland lakes.

For more information about Michigan State University please visit www.msu.edu.

Leadership

President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D.

In May 2019 the Michigan State University Board of Trustees selected Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D., as its next university president. President Stanley began his term as Michigan State’s 21st president on August 1, 2019.

President Stanley was the president of Stony Brook University from 2009 to 2019 and has nearly 15 years of higher education leadership experience. After earning his medical degree from Harvard Medical School, he completed his resident-physician training at Massachusetts General Hospital. He then went to Washington University in St. Louis for a fellowship in infectious diseases, eventually becoming a professor in the Departments of Medicine and Molecular Microbiology and one of the nation’s highest recipients of NIH funding. He was appointed vice chancellor for research at Washington University in 2006, serving in that position until he was appointed president at Stony Brook.

Board of Trustees

The trustees of Michigan State University are publicly elected by Michigan voters and have general supervision over the university and its funds. The board consists of eight members elected for staggered eight-year terms. Members serve without compensation. Board committees include academic affairs; audit, risk, and compliance; budget and finance (including the investment advisory subcommittee); and student life and culture.

Strategic Direction

In January 2020, Michigan State began a comprehensive strategic planning process. The final plan, reflecting input and refinements from many facets of the Michigan State University community, was finalized and endorsed by the board of trustees in September 2021. Implementation of the strategic plan will focus investment in areas of excellence—established and emerging—that address global challenges;
meet pressing needs expressed by communities in Michigan, across the nation and around the world; advance equity and ethics; and improve the human condition. Key pillars of the strategic plan include student success; staff and faculty success; innovation for global impact; sustainable health; stewardship and sustainability; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. More information on the strategic plan may be found here.

University Advancement

Financial and Advancement Overview

The university advancement’s operating budget for fiscal year 2021 was $36 million, which includes central advancement and 29 constituency units. In the same fiscal year, gifts to Michigan State totaled more than $232 million, representing a 25 percent increase over the previous year. Alumni generously gave more than $98.7 million, while more than $76.7 million came from corporations and foundations. MSU faculty and staff provided an additional $21 million in support. In 2020, the MSU endowment was valued at $3.4 billion.

Empower Extraordinary: The Campaign for Michigan State University

Michigan State’s most ambitious fundraising campaign in its history, Empower Extraordinary, concluded on December 31, 2019, with $1.83 billion raised over seven years. Publicly launched in October 2014, the campaign set out to make a difference for students and faculty and expand MSU’s impact through research in areas of critical importance to the world. Record giving by donors pushed the university past its original goal of $1.5 billion. With a total of 255,284 donors overall, the campaign finished strong with the best December on record at $59.4 million for the month and more than $1.24 billion received in cash and new pledges.

VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Reporting to the president and serving as a member of his executive leadership team, the vice president for university advancement will champion the university’s strategic priorities, attract new sources of funding, and promote the involvement of alumni, parents, and friends. The vice president will lead the planning, preparation, launch, and execution of a comprehensive fundraising campaign to enable the university to fully fund its strategic priorities. The vice president will provide innovative leadership and strategic vision to all aspects of university advancement, as well as hire, mentor, guide, and retain appropriate staff; ensure an optimal organizational structure; and engage, educate, nurture, and otherwise support staff, faculty, key volunteers, and senior leaders in their respective campaign fundraising efforts, ultimately resulting in an expansion of the donor base, and over time, sustainable philanthropic support for the university. In addition to the outlined formal duties, the successful vice president must be an integral member of the local and university communities.

Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Assess the growth potential and effectiveness of university advancement, adjusting the organizational structure as necessary; craft a multi-year strategy to develop the culture of
philanthropy, substantially and sustainably increase philanthropic support and engagement, and strengthen internal and external relationships on behalf of the division.

- Serve as an active member of the president’s executive team, participating in implementing the university-wide strategic plan; provide counsel regarding the fundability of identified priorities and initiatives as well as new ideas; effectively operationalize those with the most potential.

- Lead the planning, preparation, and execution of a comprehensive fundraising campaign, ensuring an optimally deployed staff and an effective, efficient infrastructure that will support a successful campaign.

- Ensure that the efforts of advancement are well coordinated, both internally and externally, and support key institutional priorities; best integrate a proactive advancement operation across all school and units, acknowledging the uniqueness of each program and the need for tailored approaches.

**Executive Engagement**

- Guide and support the president in his role as chief spokesperson and fundraiser, serving as advisor and co-strategist in cultivating prospective donors, soliciting transformative gifts, and operationalizing bold ideas. Similarly guide and support senior leaders, volunteers, faculty, and other key constituents in advancement-related activities, ensuring that their time spent is productive, meaningful, and personally rewarding.

- Cultivate strong working relationships with executive team peers, administrators, faculty, and staff across the university, engendering trust through transparent communication and a clear motivation to work as a team.

**Fundraising and Programmatic Growth**

- Evaluate, strengthen, and enhance the individual donor pipeline (annual, major, principal, and planned) as well as institutional funding; develop and implement new innovative programs to effectively reach alumni, identify and acquire prospective donors, increase donor retention, and upgrade and renew existing donors.

- Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward a select portfolio of highest-level prospects; set an example for the frontline fundraising team, demonstrating success and appropriate urgency in donor solicitation.

- Leverage the president and senior leaders to enhance MSU’s existing relationships with business and community leaders in the region to build reputational growth, and to engage unaffiliated individuals and institutions in support of the university through philanthropy and other industrial and private-public partnerships.

**Team Leadership**

- Maintain a leadership style that is honest and transparent; support, mentor, and optimally organize the 300+ member university advancement team, setting clear direction and priorities; promote excellence and impact through well-defined goals, internal role clarity, and implementation of best
practices and accountability measures; instill a sense of urgency and a proactive orientation across advancement.

- Foster a professional environment that recognizes and rewards performance, supports innovation and data-informed risk taking, builds confidence, encourages teamwork, reduces silos, retains staff, and promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion; serve as an advocate for staff, representing their concerns and needs.

**Operational Oversight**

- Ensure that all systems and processes, from data capture to gift acceptances and processing, maximize available intelligence via reporting and follow sound budgetary, legal, and accountancy practices; further develop and integrate a stewardship program that provides regular and consistent communications with donors on the use and impact of their gifts.

- Plan and carefully manage the advancement budget, ensuring that resources are deployed efficiently and effectively in support of MSU fundraising goals and objectives; utilize contemporary analytics to project, measure, and report on progress relative to goals.

**Qualifications and Experience**

The vice president will bring many, if not all, of the following professional qualifications, skills, and experiences:

- A strong desire to embrace and champion the mission, goals, potential, and people of Michigan State University.

- A minimum of 15 years of progressively responsible fundraising and managerial leadership experience in advancement; knowledge of best practices in all key areas of fundraising and strategic planning as a member of a senior leadership team; track record of success in a complex organization; a demonstrated ability to plan, manage, and successfully close a comprehensive campaign.

- Experience building upon an existing advancement program, including individual and institutional philanthropy, resulting in a transformative increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization; success increasing the effectiveness of an advancement program and its staff through established objectives and performance standards.

- Proven management skills and experience establishing a team- and goal-oriented culture that empowers staff through clear communication and delegation and that builds confidence, promotes diversity of thought, and celebrates achievement; an innate sense of, and deep commitment to, operating in highly collaborative, inclusive, and transparent environments.

- Superior written, and oral communication skills; clarity, crispness, and elegance in writing and speaking; superb storytelling skills with the ability to succinctly communicate a vision and process to senior leaders and other key constituents, utilizing data and metrics as appropriate as a foundation for advancement programs.

- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through past actionable steps.
• Exemplary interpersonal and listening skills; impeccable attention to detail and superb follow-through; strong personal integrity, flexibility, and work ethic coupled with a grounded approach and perspective.

• The credibility, maturity, and sound judgment required to effectively engage and leverage leadership, volunteers, and other key constituents in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of key prospects and donors.

• A proven track record of success in personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding principal gifts from individual and institutional donors; a high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth individuals and organizational leaders.

• A diplomatic, collaborative demeanor; the political savvy to navigate a highly complex state institution; the desire and ability to gain trust and build strong collaborative relationships with all members of an operation across a diverse organization.

• Excellent judgment and creative problem-solving skills, including the ability to resolve conflict.

• 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 personal flexibility to travel and work evenings and weekends as required.

• Bachelor’s degree required.

TO APPLY

Jack Gorman is leading this search with Grace Zakim, Molly Gallagher, and Ryan Cheung. For more information, to submit a nomination, or to apply, please visit:

www.imsearch.com/8171

Michigan State University is committed to cultivating a safe and inclusive campus community characterized by caring and respect for others. Michigan State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.