



**ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NORTHWESTERN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
[NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY](#)  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS**

# Northwestern University

Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Northwestern University in the search for an Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association.

The Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will provide strategic direction and leadership for the Northwestern Alumni Association, focusing on the continued refinement and implementation of the Alumni Association's strategic vision through programs, initiatives, and events that facilitate the growth in breadth and depth of alumni engagement. In this highly visible and critical role, the Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will be both internally and externally facing and will cultivate strong relationships with alumni, volunteers, and administrators and faculty across the University. The Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will collaborate with Alumni Relations and Development colleagues, including those in the professional schools, to support the overall Alumni Relations and Development goals. Acting as an ambassador for Northwestern University and the Northwestern Alumni Association, the Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will represent the University and Alumni Association at events and serve as an ex-officio member of the Northwestern Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Northwestern University is a preeminent global research university that is deeply interdisciplinary across multiple schools and units. Founded in 1851, Northwestern has campuses in Evanston and Chicago, Illinois, and Doha, Qatar. The University combines innovative teaching and pioneering research in a highly collaborative environment that transcends traditional academic boundaries. Northwestern provides students, faculty, and staff exceptional opportunities for intellectual, personal, and professional growth in a setting enhanced by the world-class city of Chicago.

Northwestern leadership has moved to strengthen every aspect of research and scholarship at the University, investing in faculty and expanding research space on the Evanston and Chicago campuses by nearly 30% over the past 10 years. Northwestern continued its multiyear ascent as a research powerhouse in fiscal year 2023. For the first time, the University joined a highly exclusive group of peers whose annual research funding is \$1 billion or more.

Northwestern's 17<sup>th</sup> president, Michael H. Schill, began his tenure in September 2022. After spending much of his first year gathering input and feedback from the University's schools, units, and other important stakeholders, President Schill unveiled a set of strategic priorities and guiding principles that focus on Northwestern's commitments to global eminence in research, innovation, and education and on the strengthening of its academic community across its campuses.

Northwestern's 11 priorities are organized into two areas: Research and Innovation, and Community. Spotlighting opportunities for international leadership in clean energy and sustainability, artificial intelligence, and the biosciences and to enhance the student experience on its campuses, the institutional priorities already have begun to inform the University's decision-making in strategic and sustainable ways.

Northwestern is uniquely positioned within the higher education sector. There are very few universities in the top ten that can boast the same level of excellence across arts, humanities, social sciences, and professional schools paired with a sizeable science, engineering, and medical complex. Northwestern is a founding member of the Big Ten Athletic Conference and sponsors 19 varsity teams that compete against the best in the nation. Student-athletes at Northwestern have the highest graduation rate among schools in the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision, which is the most competitive subdivision of the NCAA. In 2023, Northwestern won the national championship in women's lacrosse and was the Big Ten champion in softball.

Northwestern is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive campus community. The four intertwined strands of access, equity, enrichment, and well-being guide the focus of the institution's work through the development and implementation of strategic equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives across the University.

The achievements of the University have been financially possible due to generous alumni and friends, and the translation of its powerful science enterprise. With an endowment of \$13.7 billion (as of June 2023), Northwestern is among the best-endowed institutions in the world. The most recent comprehensive fundraising campaign, *We Will: The Campaign for Northwestern*, concluded in June 2021, with a total of \$6.1 billion raised from 174,380 donors; when the Campaign launched publicly in March 2014 its goal was to raise \$3.75 billion from at least 141,000 donors.

## **ALUMNI RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT**

Alumni Relations and Development at Northwestern University is dedicated to advancing the mission of the University as a premier research and teaching institution. Guided by the University's strategic priorities, Alumni Relations and Development nurtures lifelong, mutually beneficial relationships with alumni, parents, friends, and organizations that result in volunteer engagement and philanthropic support. The central office of Alumni Relations and Development includes employees based in Evanston and the regional offices, totaling more than 280 full-time staff. There are an additional 100 advancement staff in Northwestern's professional schools.

## **NORTHWESTERN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

The mission of the Northwestern Alumni Association is to inspire Northwestern alumni intellectually, socially, and professionally through programs that spark lifelong curiosity, connection, and growth. The Alumni Association aspires to accomplish its vision of a global Northwestern alumni community who feels empowered, connected, and engaged through every stage of life. The Northwestern Alumni Association is guided by its core values:

- Inclusivity: It builds communities where all alumni feel welcome, represented, and valued.
- Connection: It brings alumni together, bridging interests, geographies, and cultures.
- Innovation: It continuously explores new paths for enrichment and engagement.
- Collaboration: It works together, recognizing each other's unique strengths and perspectives.
- Curiosity: It embraces lifelong learning, creative exploration, and lively discussion.

For more than 140 years, the Northwestern Alumni Association has connected alumni to one another and the University. The Alumni Association has evolved to meet the changing needs and interests of alumni through compelling programming and content aligned with their intellectual, social, and professional interests.

Over the last several years, the Alumni Association has broadened offerings related to career development, intellectual programming, virtual engagement, mentorship, global engagement, and volunteer engagement.

The Northwestern Alumni Association Board and staff have worked together to conduct a strategic visioning process to create a multi-year roadmap for cultivating a more engaged and inclusive alumni community. Northwestern's more than 260,000 alumni reside in nearly 160 countries. The alumni population is becoming increasingly diverse, and a larger percentage identify as first-generation college students. Learn more about the Northwestern Alumni Association [here](#).

## **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will report to the Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development, David Lively. The Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will lead a team of 23 staff responsible for the engagement of Northwestern's diverse and global alumni community.

## **FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT**

*It is my honor to have been selected to lead Northwestern Alumni Relations and Development as the new Vice President. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to partner with talented colleagues and an extraordinary community of alumni and friends.*

*My connection to this exceptional university has become even stronger since my daughter began her undergraduate studies here two years ago. As a parent, I see firsthand how Northwestern sets students on their unique journeys of academic and personal growth.*

*We in Northwestern Alumni Relations and Development are inspired by the remarkable achievements of our alumni. They make the University proud every day—through their professional success, leadership in their local communities and countries, and impact on the world. Northwestern also benefits from our alumni—through their dedicated volunteer service, passionate ambassadorship, and generous philanthropy.*

*The role of Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association is a wonderful opportunity to work with these incredible alumni and shape the next era of alumni relations at our top-tier University. This is an especially exciting time to join the Northwestern Alumni Association as we accelerate the rollout of our strategic vision and begin to see the impact of these strategies in boosting engagement of alumni around the world.*

*Additionally, Alumni Relations and Development is in the process of building a new CRM and other associated engagement solutions. This Salesforce-based system will allow us to provide more personalized experiences for our alumni, volunteers, and donors; drive better-informed business decisions; optimize operational efficiencies; and increase integration and collaboration within Alumni Relations and Development and with campus partners, to achieve our ambitious engagement and fundraising aspirations.*

*We have renewed our commitment to fostering a vibrant, inclusive alumni community and now need a dynamic leader who can drive the Alumni Association's trajectory. We are looking for a seasoned manager with extensive alumni engagement and volunteer management experience who is relationship-oriented, collaborative, and innovative.*

*The successful candidate will be intentional about the prioritization of strategies, initiatives, and resources, relying on data and analytics to guide the way. This leader would also benefit from having a global lens and experience engaging international alumni.*

*Importantly, the Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will have the fortunate opportunity to work with the Alumni Association staff, a dedicated group of alumni engagement professionals who are creative, collegial, and work well as a team.*

*I am delighted that you are interested in this role and look forward to receiving your application.*

—David Lively, Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development

## **NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

Differences are central to broadening perspectives, creating thoughtful leaders, and sparking new ideas. Northwestern University is diligent about creating an environment that is inclusive and truly diverse. Its students, faculty, and staff come from different backgrounds—intellectually, ethnically, economically, and geographically—and the University would not have it any other way.

Northwestern University has long been recognized as a leader in higher education, and it is building upon its rich legacy in the cultivation of a truly inclusive and equitable environment. The University's Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion's core objective is to ensure each member of the Northwestern community feels not just included, but truly integral to its institutional fabric. The University is committed to fostering a culture where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. Simultaneously, it acknowledges the urgency of implementing strategic interventions to address systemic issues, such as racism, marginalization, and discrimination.

Northwestern University firmly believes in an institution where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not mere words but woven into the very fabric of its policies, practices, and curriculum. Embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in all these elements not only enhances the University's educational outcomes, but also enriches the growth of its community members, while fostering a campus culture of acceptance, understanding, and mutual respect.

## **PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Alumni Community Engagement**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will

- cultivate a global alumni community that feels empowered, connected, and engaged through every stage of life;
- guide meaningful engagement of alumni on Northwestern's campuses and around the world through programs, events, communications, and outreach efforts;
- foster an inclusive community where all alumni feel they belong;
- bolster engagement of alumni who live outside the U.S.;
- develop and market programming that creates interaction and engagement around the University's strategic priorities as well as the interests and passions of Northwestern alumni;
- partner with Alumni Relations and Development's Marketing and Communications team to create effective communications for alumni and volunteers;

- work with Alumni Relations and Development analytics colleagues to deepen the understanding of the demographics, perceptions, needs, and behaviors of alumni, through an annual “pulse” survey and other market research efforts;
- lead the development of alumni segmentation strategies to make programming and communications more personalized and targeted;
- participate as a leader in the roll out of Alumni Relations and Development's new CRM (built on the Salesforce platform) and craft approaches for optimizing the new system to drive increased engagement; and
- serve as an ambassador for the University and the Alumni Association and speak at University and alumni events.

### **Collaboration**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will

- collaborate closely with Alumni Relations and Development colleagues as well as with administrators and faculty across the University;
- foster strong relationships for the Alumni Association with key units across the University, including Northwestern colleges and schools, Northwestern Career Advancement, Division of Student Affairs, Office of Undergraduate Admission, Athletics and Recreation, and other stakeholders; and
- represent the Alumni Association and Alumni Relations and Development on University committees and act as a unifier for alumni relations initiatives across the University.

### **Volunteer Engagement**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will

- develop and implement an overall strategy for volunteer recruitment, pathways, recognition, and training, including the annual Northwestern Leadership Symposium;
- serve as Secretary and Treasurer of the Northwestern Alumni Association Board of Directors and partner with Board members in shaping the Alumni Association's vision, strategic direction, and priorities;
- provide support for Alumni Association Board member recruitment and stewardship efforts;
- cultivate a robust pipeline of alumni for volunteer opportunities, ensuring that the volunteer community reflects the diversity of Northwestern’s alumni population; and
- partner with Alumni Relations and Development colleagues to create metrics and analytics that present a comprehensive view of volunteer engagement.

### **Strategic Planning**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will

- lead the implementation of the Northwestern Alumni Association’s strategic vision, which outlines a multi-year roadmap to cultivate a more engaged alumni community;
- develop and implement innovative strategies and programs that inspire Northwestern alumni intellectually, socially, and professionally;
- broaden the Alumni Association’s outreach, particularly to alumni segments that have not been as intentionally engaged;
- set measurable goals and outcomes for the Alumni Association and assess progress toward goals;
- lead the Alumni Association team in using data and analytics to measure the effectiveness of existing programs while identifying opportunities for new initiatives that will resonate with alumni;

- benchmark with peer institutions and identify best practices to engage alumni in ways that are true to Northwestern;
- serve as a key stakeholder in developing the overall strategic direction of Alumni Relations and Development; and
- ensure that the Alumni Association's strategies and programs are aligned with the University's priorities and complement and support the goals and strategies of Alumni Relations and Development.

### **Administration**

The Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will

- lead a team of alumni relations professionals who are talented, hardworking, and dedicated to Northwestern's mission;
- recruit, retain, coach, and develop Alumni Association team members;
- develop and evaluate well-defined individual and team metrics and goals, creating and sustaining a culture of excellence and professional growth;
- provide clear direction and oversight;
- foster a team environment that inspires, recognizes, and rewards high-performance, promotes innovation, encourages teamwork, and values diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- lead by example through the demonstration of collegiality, creative problem solving, and cross-organizational collaboration;
- establish efficient processes that enhance operations, productivity, and impact; and
- manage budgets and resources for the Alumni Association, continually evaluating for maximum results and cost effectiveness.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **David Lively ('26 P)**

#### **Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development**

David Lively was appointed Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development at Northwestern University in February 2024, and previously served as Interim Vice President. Lively leads a team of 280 staff in engaging more than 260,000 Northwestern alumni worldwide and securing philanthropic gifts in support of the University. He serves as a member of President Michael H. Schill's senior staff.

With 30 years of experience in higher education advancement, Lively has directed successful development strategies across five comprehensive fundraising campaigns. He joined Northwestern Alumni Relations and Development in 2012, with responsibility for school and program fundraising. In 2015, he was promoted to Associate Vice President and Campaign Manager, leading a team of 60 development professionals responsible for principal gifts, regional and international major gifts (including offices in New York and San Francisco), and gift planning. He was promoted to Senior Associate Vice President in 2017.

Lively led *We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern*—one of the largest fundraising campaigns in U.S. higher education history. The *We Will* Campaign, publicly launched in March 2014, raised \$6.1 billion to support the University's *Northwestern Will* strategic plan. Following the conclusion of the Campaign in June 2021, Lively helped Northwestern raise a record-breaking \$1 billion in new gifts and commitments in its first post-Campaign year.

Prior to coming to Northwestern, Lively served as Vice President of Development at DePaul University in Chicago, where he oversaw the University's first fundraising campaign in more than two decades. Lively also held development positions at the University of Denver, the University of Colorado Foundation, and Northwestern's Pritzker School of Law from 1997 to 1999.

Lively received an MBA from the University of Denver, a master's degree in history from Colorado State University, and a bachelor's degree in history from Southern Methodist University. He is the author of *Managing Major Gift Fundraisers: A Contrarian's Guide* (published by CASE) and co-host of the podcast *Talking Shop*.

## PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate for the role of Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association will be a compelling communicator with the experience and skill necessary to partner with and influence internal and external stakeholders. The Assistant Vice President and Executive Director will be an effective strategist, proven manager of high performing teams, and a leader who displays collegiality, empathy, and diplomacy.

Furthermore, Northwestern University seeks an Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association with

- a commitment to the mission of Northwestern University—excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community;
- an understanding of the dynamics and interconnectedness of university and alumni group relationships;
- extensive volunteer management and leadership experience as well as an ability to maximize collaboration between alumni partners and university leadership;
- success leading an engagement program in a large, complex organization;
- experience recruiting, coaching, and inspiring teams to implement a strategic vision and meet aspirational quantitative and qualitative outcomes;
- the stature, credibility, and collaborative skills needed to build and sustain effective working relationships with colleagues at all levels of Alumni Relations and Development, as well as with volunteers and key partners across the University;
- experience working with international alumni and engaging large overseas communities;
- exceptional interpersonal skills and an ability to connect with a diverse community of alumni;
- outstanding written and oral communication skills as well as effective public speaking skills;
- extensive experience working with volunteers and boards;
- strong analytical and problem-solving skills;
- an ability to analyze data, think strategically, and act decisively;
- experience fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment;
- knowledge of best practices, emerging issues, trends, and opportunities in alumni relations; and
- exceptional discretion, judgment, and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality.

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least ten years of experience leading a successful alumni relations, advancement, or similar engagement program is required for this role. Northwestern University will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the Alumni Association and the University, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

## SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$220,000 to \$240,000 annually. Northwestern University offers a comprehensive [package of employee benefits](#).

## LOCATION

This position is in Evanston, Illinois. Alumni Relations and Development follows a hybrid work schedule where employees may work remotely up to two days per week.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Northwestern University and the Northwestern Alumni Association as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

Northwestern University is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer of all protected classes, including veterans and individuals with disabilities. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply.

To apply for this position, visit: [Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and Executive Director of the Northwestern Alumni Association, Northwestern University](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact Tom Herbert, [tomherbert@aspenleadershipgroup.com](mailto:tomherbert@aspenleadershipgroup.com).

*All inquiries will be held in confidence.*