



Chicago, Illinois
Full-time Position Announcement:
Director of Major Gifts

Description

Merit School of Music seeks a full-time **Director of Major Gifts** to build upon and continue to grow our major gifts program. The ideal candidate will be a creative, organized, and dynamic development professional with an entrepreneurial spirit. Passion for inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism and Merit's mission to provide access to music education is a must.

Organizational Overview

Merit School of Music is a community music school located in Chicago's West Loop. Our primary goals are to help young people transform their lives and experience personal growth through music by providing access to sustained participation. For more than 40 years, we have been home to a diverse community of talented young musicians and have acted as a springboard for achieving full musical and personal potential. Our 146 passionate and experienced teaching artists provide access to high-quality music education, engaging over 3,000 students annually at our downtown location and in area schools and community centers.

Our students, who reflect the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of Chicago, have the rare opportunity to learn together, dream together, teach each other, and broaden their horizons as they build inspiring lives through music. Merit develops musicians and provides young people with the tools they need to excel in life, with virtually 100 percent of our graduates going on to conservatory or college.

Merit School of Music is committed to building a world in which historically underrepresented groups can attain access to quality music education. Simultaneously, Merit is continually working towards becoming an organization that is truly reflective of the demographics of the city and the students we serve. Merit is dedicated to being an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and anti-racist organization and continually examining our efforts in this area.

Reporting Relationship

The **Director of Major Gifts** reports to the **VP for Development and Marketing**.

Job Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the **Director of Major Gifts** include, but are not limited to:

Individual Fundraising Management and Donor Communications – approx. 60%

- o Create, implement, and manage various efforts to secure renewed, lapsed, and new financial support from individuals and corporations at the \$5,000 level and above. This entails managing a portfolio of 100-150 major donors and prospects to secure both annual and multi-year gifts.
- o Make meaningful personal contacts with major donors and prospects to deepen their relationship and investment in Merit.
- o Work collaboratively with leadership, staff, and appropriate partners to acquire information necessary to present resource development needs that correspond with donor desires and support organizational priorities.
- o Conduct prospect research and prepare donor profiles using the database, wealth screening, recommendations from stakeholders, and other means to identify and qualify donors for cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship opportunities
- o Draft proposals, gift agreements, reports, and other written materials to support gift solicitation and stewardship for the personal portfolio as well as in support of the major gift portfolios of the VP for Development & Marketing and the President/Executive Director
- o Work, as appropriate, with donor leadership volunteers to secure visits with those in their peer networks
- o Ensure that excellent customer service is provided to donors through accessibility to appropriate staff and leadership (as granted), timely responsiveness, quality in all interactions, and personalized communications; be purposeful about every visit and communication and the desired outcome for each touchpoint.
- o Serve as an informed, passionate and visible spokesperson for Merit, as a prominent face of fundraising throughout the community.
- o Work closely with the Vice President for Development & Marketing on Merit's upcoming Comprehensive Campaign (in the planning phase and likely launching in 2023) including: identifying gift opportunities, researching prospects, planning gift strategies, writing proposals, prioritizing time with department heads and the President & ED to position Merit in the music education space in Chicago and nationally to facilitate compelling solicitations as needed.
- o Utilize Raiser's Edge/NXT to track activity and goals and report results.
- o Attend Merit and community events and participate in other meetings, training opportunities, or activities as necessary to further cultivate and prospect donor relationships.

Planned Giving – approx. 20%

- o Work with the Vice President for Development to reinvigorate Merit's planned giving program, the Emma Endres-Kountz Society. This includes assessing the program's current state, developing a communications strategy with current members, creating a more regular stewardship program, and implementing a campaign to attract new members.

Annual Gala – approx. 20%

- o Work closely with the development and marketing teams to fundraise for, produce, and execute Merit's Annual Gala
- o Secure corporate gifts for the annual gala by working with peer fundraisers to identify prospects and submitting applications as appropriate
- o Collaborate with VP for Development & Marketing and Director of Marketing and others on the development team on the production of materials such as the gala invitation, program, videos, etc. to ensure a successful event

Personal Skills/Attributes/Qualifications

To be successful in this job, you will excel in these areas:

Relationship-building: building and maintaining relationships with donors and prospective donors, having the ability to develop collaborative and warm relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders including executives, high-level volunteers, high-net-worth individuals, internal stakeholders, and leadership.

Highly organized time-management: able to demonstrate an effective system for managing an ambitious workload and identify and proactively address priorities.

Attention to detail: Commitment to accuracy in communications, follow-through to maintain credibility and trust, exemplify high standards for performance and personal responsibility.

Initiative: self-starter with the ability to take the initiative and work independently in a fast-paced environment, fluency in managing multiple projects and competing priorities with professionalism.

Communication: strong writing skills are required to communicate compelling fundraising appeals that successfully encourage donors to provide financial support. Strong interpersonal skills for speaking and listening are also required.

Strategic Thinking: strong analytic and strategic-thinking skills, with demonstrated ability to create, implement, and monitor plans and translate those plans into fundraising and stewardship strategies

Commitment to Merit's mission: a strong commitment to Merit's mission and accessibility to music education is a must to be able to connect with donors and prospects successfully

Flexible mindset: willingness to learn new skills and think outside the box to support various projects is required. The right candidate will be comfortable working independently and on projects with team members. Openness to working a flexible schedule, including evenings and weekends, is required at times to support committee meetings and concerts and other events.

Familiarity with databases is required, and Raiser's Edge is a plus. Familiarity with *iWavePro* is a plus for donor research. MS Office proficiency is required (Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Excel). Using Canva and Constant Contact is a plus but not a requirement. Experience with special events is a plus but not required.

Educational and Experiential Requirements

- Bachelor's degree preferred
- 8+ years of relevant experience with a successful fundraising track record in individual giving and/or major gifts
- Experience with fundraising for the arts and/or education is a plus

Schedule

M-F schedule, 37.5 hours/week, generally from 9-5 central, with some flexibility available for strong performers. Some evenings and weekends are required for special events but taking comp time is an option in consultation with your supervisor. Merit staff is currently working a hybrid of remote and in-person hours. All hybrid and remote arrangements are determined between staff and supervisor. During the first three to six months of work, working in the office two full days per /week (likely Tuesday and Thursday) will be required for onboarding and training.

COVID-19 Precautions

Merit School of Music requires all employees to provide proof of vaccination and booster shot against COVID-19. Please plan accordingly. Merit invested heavily in its HVAC system to improve ventilation throughout the building. Face masks are recommended to everyone who enters the Joy Faith Knapp Music Center. At offsite events, Merit employees must follow the precautions taken by the host institution.

Compensation and Application

Compensation commensurate with experience but based on a starting salary of \$70,000 annually.

To apply, please upload your resume detailing your relevant experience and qualifications for this role [using this link](#). Applications will be accepted through **July 31, 2022**. Materials should be compatible with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF. Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of their materials through Airtable and further guidance and updates about the hiring process by e-mail, with interviews provided for finalists.

ALAANA/BIPOC people, trans and gender-nonconforming people, and women are encouraged to apply.

For more information about Merit School of Music, please visit www.meritmusic.org.

Merit School of Music is committed to enhancing the diversity of our musical community, recognizing that by providing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for our students, we are preparing them for personal and professional success in an increasingly multicultural and global society. The Merit community recognizes that it has a responsibility for creating and sustaining a learning and working environment where difference is valued, and where equity and inclusion are practiced.