



DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT

Start Date: July 1, 2027 (or sooner)

Sonoma Academy

Santa Rosa, California | sonomaacademy.org



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

MISSION STATEMENT

Sonoma Academy calls its students to be creative, ethical, and committed to learning. The school nurtures inspiring teachers and engages with the surrounding community, and its students communicate across cultures as they prepare to become leaders in a dynamic world.

At a Glance



2001
established



310
total enrollment



35%
students of color



34
total faculty



76%
faculty with
advanced degrees



10:1
student-faculty ratio



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OVERVIEW

Located 50 miles north of San Francisco in the heart of bucolic California wine county, Sonoma Academy (SA) is the only independent, college-preparatory high school in the area. Founded in 2001, SA experienced tremendous growth and innovation in its first 25 years. SA celebrates “teenagehood” and provides an engaging, challenging, and innovative college-preparatory education in a supportive community of 310 students (grades 9-12) from five neighboring counties. The campus spans 34 acres and is surrounded by 1000 acres of protected space at the base of Taylor Mountain.

Head of School Percy L. Abram was appointed in 2025, and as he, the Board, and the senior leadership team continue to envision SA’s bright future, he seeks a Director of Advancement to lead SA’s advancement and philanthropic initiatives and functions. This position reports to the Head of School, serves on and collaborates closely with the senior leadership team, and manages a collaborative and hard working team that includes an Associate Director of Advancement and Constituent Database and Advancement Services Manager.

The Director of Advancement will play a central role in shaping Sonoma Academy’s future and long-term sustainability by building a robust and sustained culture of philanthropy, deepening relationships across the community, and driving transformational fundraising efforts that advances the school’s visibility and reputation throughout the North Bay and beyond. This leader will bring expertise and sophistication in donor strategy, campaign execution, stewardship, board partnership, and advancement operations while serving as a visible ambassador for the school within the broader community. The successful candidate is collaborative, highly accountable, and energized by measurable outcomes and meaningful relationship-building and who understands the interconnected nature of philanthropy, storytelling and community engagement.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Director of Advancement will join Sonoma Academy at an exciting moment in the school's evolution. Head of School Percy L. Abram is a strategic, experienced, and energetic leader who views philanthropy as central to SA's future. He seeks a trusted thought partner who will help shape and achieve the school's fundraising goals, including strengthening and growing the endowment in support of long-term sustainability and strategic priorities.

This search comes during a period of meaningful transition within the Advancement Office. SA's longtime Director of External Affairs, who has successfully led advancement efforts and cultivated deep and trusting relationships across the community, is moving into a new role as Director of Strategy & Culture, focused on institutional planning and long-range vision. This transition creates an opportunity for the school to establish a dedicated Director of Advancement role and continue to build a strong culture of philanthropy.

Sonoma Academy benefits from a history of generosity, successful fundraising campaigns, and significant investment in its campus and programs. Since its founding, the school has been supported by a group of transformational donors whose sustained generosity has helped shape the institution. While this support remains a tremendous asset, the next Director of Advancement will have the opportunity to broaden the donor base and strengthen the pipeline of philanthropic support beyond the school's most significant contributors. Trustees and families demonstrate deep commitment to SA, and there is considerable opportunity to further engage alumni, alumni parents, grandparents, and other constituents in the life and future of the school.



The Director of Advancement will serve as a visible and authentic presence within the community, building relationships across constituencies and fostering a shared culture of philanthropy. The role also presents an opportunity to deepen SA's visibility and engagement throughout Sonoma County by cultivating partnerships with mission-aligned businesses, organizations, and community leaders.

Priorities, opportunities, and challenges for the next Director of Advancement include:

- Partnering closely with Head of School to advance Sonoma Academy's mission through a comprehensive and strategic advancement program;
- Providing strategic leadership for the Advancement Office, including supervising, mentoring, and empowering the Associate Director of Advancement and the Constituent Database & Advancement Services Manager, while fostering a collaborative, high-performing team culture;
- Building a collaborative and productive partnership with the Director of Strategy & Culture to ensure continuity and alignment during this leadership transition;
- Strengthening the school's endowment to support long-term sustainability and strategic priorities;
- Broadening the donor base and deepening the pipeline of philanthropic support;
- Expanding engagement in philanthropy across all constituencies, including trustees, alumni, grandparents, current and alumni parents, and friends of the school;
- Reigniting Sonoma Academy's alumni engagement program;
- Strengthening and expanding grandparent engagement and giving;
- Cultivating new partnerships throughout Sonoma County to enhance community connections and support for the school;
- Building meaningful relationships with constituents whose experiences and perspectives reflect the diversity of the SA community; and
- Collaborating closely with colleagues in enrollment, communications, and finance to align advancement efforts with the school's broader institutional goals.



\$5.2M
financial aid
awarded



60%
students receiving
aid



\$7M
endowment



\$25M
reserves



\$19M
annual operating
budget



34 acres
campus size

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.
- Minimum of ten years of progressively responsible advancement and fundraising leadership experience, preferably within an independent school, nonprofit, or mission-driven organization
- Demonstrated success in securing major gifts and leading comprehensive fundraising initiatives with measurable results.
- Proven ability to develop and execute strategic advancement plans while managing multiple priorities and deadlines.
- Strong leadership and team management experience with a demonstrated ability to build high-performing, collaborative teams.
- High level of strategic thinking, organizational sophistication, and operational excellence.
- Experience working closely with Boards of Trustees.
- Strong analytical and project management skills, including experience utilizing advancement data and metrics to drive decision-making and results.
- Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Deep commitment to inclusive fundraising practices.
- Ability to connect authentically with a wide range of constituencies, including students, families, alumni, trustees, faculty, donors, and community partners.
- Warmth, humor, humility, flexibility, and a collaborative spirit.
- Passion for independent school education and transformative impact of philanthropy.

LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [Philosophy and Values](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
- [Strategic Plan](#)
- [Virtual Campus Tour](#)
- [School Profile](#)
- [College Matriculation](#)





TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

SARA SHULMAN

Practice Leader – Development and Finance/Senior Consultant
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JENNIFER WONG CHRISTENSEN

Senior Consultant
jennifer.christensen@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is \$175,000-250,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, education background, and expertise.



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