

EXECUTIVE SEARCH · 2026-2027

Chief Advancement Officer

Advancing the mission, momentum, and future of Franklin Academy

Franklin Academy

EAST HADDAM, CONNECTICUT

An entrepreneurial advancement leader and member of the Head of School's Cabinet who will continue to grow the annual fund, build campaign readiness from the campus master plan, and help celebrate Franklin's 25th academic year as the school expands opportunity for neurodivergent students.



Franklin Academy
BELONG | GROW | SUCCEED

SEARCH CONDUCTED BY
Magister Placement

THE POSITION

The Opportunity

01

Franklin Academy seeks an accomplished, entrepreneurial advancement leader to build a comprehensive, high-performing program that turns relationships into lasting philanthropic impact. The Chief Advancement Officer will lead the school beyond transactional fundraising toward a strategic culture of engagement, generosity, and investment in Franklin's future.

Franklin is at an exciting inflection point. With **record enrollment**, a growing national profile, and an expanding commitment to educating neurodivergent students, the school is preparing for its next era of impact. Working closely with the Head of School, Board of Trustees, and senior leadership, the CAO will define and execute a bold strategy that strengthens the annual fund, expands major giving, deepens alumni and family engagement, and readies the institution for its next comprehensive campaign.

The immediate mandate is ambitious and achievable: consistently **meet and exceed annual fund goals**, broaden the donor pipeline, and design and build initiatives that support the needs of Franklin Academy. The CAO will also turn the priorities of Franklin's campus master plan into a clear case for support, helping to launch the school's **25th academic year** and lay the foundation for a future capital campaign.

REPORTS TO Head of School	LEADERSHIP ROLE Cabinet • Senior Administrative Team
ANNUAL FUND GOAL \$500,000 and growing	MILESTONE AHEAD Franklin's 25th Academic Year
CAMPAIGN HORIZON Master plan & capital campaign	LOCATION East Haddam, Connecticut

“*Franklin Academy creates a community-focused boarding and day school where students with unique learning styles develop and strengthen academic and social competencies vital to the pursuit of college goals, professional aspirations, and fulfilling lives.*”

FRANKLIN ACADEMY • OUR MISSION



POSITION SUMMARY

Strategic Priorities

02

Reporting directly to the Head of School and serving on the Cabinet, the Chief Advancement Officer is Franklin's senior leader for philanthropy, constituent engagement, and campaign strategy. The CAO sets the vision, builds the systems and relationships for sustained growth, and owns measurable results. The right leader is equally at home shaping strategy, cultivating transformational relationships, making direct asks, coaching trustees and volunteers, and executing with discipline.



01

Deliver Philanthropic Growth

Build and run a data-informed development plan that meets or exceeds goals and grows participation, retention, and giving year over year.



02

Build Campaign Readiness

Translate the campus master plan into an inspiring case for support, campaign architecture, prospect pipeline, feasibility strategy, and volunteer leadership.



03

Expand Access Through Aid

Develop annual, major-gift, and special campaign strategies that grow philanthropic support for a growing need-based financial aid program.



04

Activate the 25th Year

Use the milestone to celebrate Franklin's impact, reconnect alumni and families, strengthen storytelling, and build momentum toward a capital campaign.



05

Elevate Alumni Engagement

Create a purposeful alumni program that builds lifelong connection, highlights alumni outcomes, and grows the pipeline of future volunteers and donors.



06

Strengthen Infrastructure

Put in place the people, systems, analytics, stewardship practices, and culture of a sophisticated, scalable independent school advancement operation.

“Our future is robust and full of endless opportunities for neurodivergent students.”

DR. ALEXANDER MORRIS-WOOD · HEAD OF SCHOOL

The Role

03

Fundraising Strategy

PLANNING & EXECUTION

-  Develop and lead a **multiyear advancement plan** aligned with Franklin's mission, strategic plan, enrollment growth, financial aid priorities, and campus vision.
-  Own the **full fundraising cycle**: identification, qualification, cultivation, solicitation, gift closure, stewardship, and renewal.
-  Maintain an active **personal portfolio** of leadership annual fund, major-gift, and campaign prospects with clear activity and revenue expectations.
-  Increase **participation and retention** across current families, alumni, alumni families, grandparents, trustees, friends, foundations, and institutional partners.
-  Design **giving societies**, leadership giving strategies, matching opportunities, and challenge campaigns that inspire higher levels of investment.
-  Measure goals, forecasts, pipelines, and results regularly and **report them clearly** to the Head of School and Board.

Major Gifts & Campaigns

INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

-  Lead the **quiet, preparatory stages** of the next capital campaign: prospect research, planning, case development, gift table modeling, and readiness assessment.
-  Partner with school leadership and campus planners to turn **master plan findings** into fundable priorities with clear educational impact.
-  Build **comprehensive campaigns** that connect financial aid, program innovation, faculty excellence, student experience, and campus needs in one philanthropic narrative.
-  Identify and cultivate donors capable of **transformational gifts**, and personally lead high-level solicitations with the Head of School, trustees, and volunteers.
-  Guide the selection and management of **campaign counsel**, research partners, and other external resources when appropriate.

“*The Chief Advancement Officer will lead the school beyond transactional fundraising toward a strategic culture of engagement, generosity, and investment in Franklin's future.*”

THE MANDATE

The Role, *continued*

04

Alumni, Family & Community

ENGAGEMENT

-  Create and implement a comprehensive **alumni engagement strategy** that honors the distinctive experiences and needs of Franklin graduates and their families.
-  Build meaningful ways for alumni to connect through **events, communications, mentoring, volunteer service, and philanthropy.**
-  Partner with the Head of School and colleagues to deepen engagement with **current and former families**, with consistent cultivation and thoughtful stewardship.
-  Use the **25th academic year** to gather and share stories of student and alumni impact, celebrate community history, and inspire future investment.
-  Develop **volunteer leadership structures** that engage trustees, alumni, families, and friends as ambassadors and fundraisers.

Leadership & Operations

BOARD PARTNERSHIP

-  Serve as a **strategic advisor** to the Head of School and a collaborative Cabinet member, bringing a philanthropic lens to planning and decisions.
-  Partner with the **Board and its Development Committee** to set goals, monitor performance, cultivate prospects, and strengthen trustee engagement.
-  **Lead and mentor** advancement staff and volunteers with clear roles, accountability, professional development, and shared standards.
-  Oversee **advancement operations**: budgeting, database integrity, gift processing, acknowledgments, prospect management, privacy, reporting, and ethical practice.
-  Direct the school's **grants strategy** and advancement events, tying each to clear relationship, revenue, and institutional goals.
-  Collaborate with **communications** colleagues so brand, storytelling, publications, events, and digital presence advance engagement and giving.
-  Build a **culture of philanthropy** across faculty, staff, trustees, students, alumni, and families.

“The successful candidate will be equally comfortable shaping institutional strategy, cultivating transformational relationships, making direct asks, coaching trustees and volunteers, and ensuring disciplined execution.”

LEADING THE WORK

Measures of Success

05

\$500K+
ANNUAL FUND GOAL

25th
ACADEMIC YEAR AHEAD

Campaign
READINESS FROM THE
MASTER PLAN

- 01 Annual fund revenue meets or exceeds **\$500,000**, with a credible strategy for continued growth.
- 02 A **larger, more diverse, and actively managed pipeline** of leadership and major-gift prospects is in place.
- 03 Donor acquisition, participation, retention, upgrades, and **multiyear commitments** improve measurably.
- 04 A compelling **case for support** and a disciplined campaign-readiness plan emerge from the campus master plan and strategic priorities.
- 05 Philanthropic support for **financial aid** expands in both annual and endowed or long-term forms.
- 06 **Alumni and alumni-family engagement** grows through meaningful programs, stronger data, higher participation, and a culture of lifelong connection.
- 07 The **25th academic year** generates visibility, pride, engagement, and momentum for Franklin's next chapter.

“*This work will help launch Franklin's 25th academic year and establish the early foundation for a future capital campaign.*”

FRANKLIN'S NEXT CHAPTER

About Franklin

06

Franklin Academy was founded in 2001 and opened its doors in East Haddam in 2003 as one of the first accredited college-preparatory boarding schools in the country designed for students with nonverbal learning disabilities and autism spectrum profiles. From its first class of 33 students, it has grown into a nationally recognized community for bright, neurodivergent learners.

Today Franklin is a coeducational boarding and day school serving **grades 8–12 and a postgraduate year** on a 75-acre campus above the Connecticut River. The school opened 2026–27 with a **record enrollment of 105 students**.

Franklin was built for neurodivergent learners from the ground up, not adapted as an afterthought. Executive functioning support, social-emotional learning, and life skills are woven through every class, residence, and activity, so students learn to **belong, grow, and succeed**.

Under Head of School **Dr. Alexander Morris-Wood**, Franklin has reached **new levels of achievement in programming, admissions, and advancement**. Building on that momentum, the school is extending its reach through the new Center for Neurodiversity and preparing for its 25th academic year.



Franklin Academy

BELONG | GROW | SUCCEED

2001

FOUNDED

75

ACRE CAMPUS

105

STUDENTS · RECORD
ENROLLMENT

4:1

STUDENT : TEACHER

8–12

GRADES, PLUS PG
YEAR

2×

NATIONAL COLLEGE
COMPLETION RATE*

“*A community where differences make the difference.*”

FRANKLIN ACADEMY

*Alumni college graduation rate compared with the national average for neurodivergent students, as reported by Franklin Academy. Accredited by NEASC; member of NAIS and CAIS.



A School Built for Different Minds

07



Designed for Neurodivergent Learners

Every structure, from class size to residential life, is built for students with autism spectrum, NVLD, ADHD, and other learning profiles, with a strength-based approach to each one.



College & Career Readiness

A four-year college and career curriculum, portfolio-based guidance, and dual enrollment with the University of Connecticut, continued after graduation through Franklin College Connections.



In the Presence of Animals

A signature program that now includes Anthrozoology as a core science domain, a first among high schools for neurodivergent learners.



Life Skills, Lived Daily

Executive functioning coaching, social learning, and independent living skills are embedded in a close residential community where students practice them every day.



Arts, Athletics & Adventure

About 40% of students perform on stage. Varsity teams compete in four conferences, and travel programs have reached London, the Bahamas, and Tokyo.



Center for Neurodiversity

Franklin shares its expertise beyond campus through evaluations, family services, educator training, and partnerships with schools and colleges.

Belong. Grow. Succeed.

THE FRANKLIN PROMISE

The Connecticut River Valley

08

Franklin sits on River Road in East Haddam, a classic New England town of historic villages, stone walls, and rolling woodland along the Connecticut River. Settled in the 1600s and incorporated in 1734, East Haddam blends small-town warmth with a surprisingly rich cultural life. It is close to Hartford, New Haven, and the shoreline, and within easy reach of Boston and New York.



Broadway on the River

The landmark 1877 Goodspeed Opera House, a two-time Tony Award winner, launched *Annie* and *Man of La Mancha* and still premieres musicals each season.



Gillette Castle

Actor William Gillette's stone castle crowns a state park with sweeping river views and wooded trails along his old private railroad.



Trails & State Parks

Devil's Hopyard State Park offers 860 acres of hiking, camping, and the 60-foot Chapman Falls, with more preserves and lakes nearby.



Life on the River

Boat, paddle, and watch bald eagles in winter. Cross the 1913 East Haddam Swing Bridge or ride the seasonal Chester–Hadlyme ferry.



Village Character

A historic district of 19th-century buildings, local artisans, the Gelston House, cozy inns, and the schoolhouse where Nathan Hale taught in 1773.



Within Easy Reach

Shoreline beaches and Amtrak at Old Saybrook are about 25 minutes away. Hartford and New Haven are under an hour, and Boston and New York about two hours.

1734

TOWN INCORPORATED

~8,900

RESIDENTS

~45 min

TO HARTFORD

~2 hrs

TO BOSTON & NYC

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Who We're Looking For

09

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- ✓ **Bachelor's degree required;** an advanced degree or relevant professional credential preferred.
- ✓ **Significant, progressively responsible advancement experience,** ideally in an independent school, college, university, or mission-driven nonprofit.
- ✓ A strong record of **meeting ambitious annual fund goals** and personally securing major gifts.
- ✓ Experience **building or advancing a campaign:** comprehensive, capital, or campaign-readiness.

EXPERTISE

- ✓ Deep understanding of **annual giving, major gifts, planned giving,** stewardship, prospect research, and advancement services.
- ✓ Knowledge of **alumni relations** and volunteer management.
- ✓ Experience partnering with a **Head of School or CEO** and working with boards, committees, and volunteer leaders.
- ✓ **Strong analytical and organizational skills,** turning data into strategy and delivering measurable results.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- ✓ **Excellent communication,** with the ability to make a compelling case for support to varied audiences.
- ✓ **High integrity,** sound judgment, discretion, and emotional intelligence.
- ✓ A genuine commitment to **relationship-based fundraising.**
- ✓ Deep commitment to Franklin's mission and to **expanding opportunity for neurodivergent students.**

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal Chief Advancement Officer is a confident relationship builder, persuasive storyteller, disciplined strategist, and visible champion for Franklin Academy. This person brings **ambition without ego, urgency with patience,** and a belief that excellent advancement work begins with authentic connection.

“*They will see the school's momentum as an invitation to build something exceptional: an advancement program that sustains access, strengthens the campus, engages generations of Franklin families, and secures the institution's future.*”

THE INVITATION

JOIN FRANKLIN ACADEMY

How to Apply

1

Prepare your materials

A thoughtful cover letter, your résumé, and a list of professional references.

2

Combine them into a single PDF

All three documents merged, in order, into one PDF file.

3

Send it to our search lead

Email your single PDF to Mike Kowalchick at the address below. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, and all inquiries are held in confidence.

SEARCH LEAD • MAGISTER PLACEMENT

Mike Kowalchick

mike@magisterplacement.com

On behalf of Franklin Academy

MP

This search is conducted by **Magister Placement** on behalf of **Franklin Academy**. Franklin Academy is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applicants who share its commitment to neurodivergent learners and to a community where differences make the difference. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status.

MAGISTER
PLACEMENT



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