

ACELA SOLUTIONS PRESENTS A NATIONAL SEARCH FOR

CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER

SEARCH PROSPECTUS | DETROIT, MICHIGAN

IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY



PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION & LIVING THE COMPLETE LIFE



Retained national search conducted on behalf of the New Common School Foundation

Build a culture of philanthropy for the next generation

An inaugural role connecting mission, relationships, philanthropy and measurable opportunity for Detroit children and families.

The New Common School Foundation seeks an inaugural Chief Advancement Officer to build a comprehensive, disciplined and deeply relational culture of philanthropy. This is a fundraising-intensive leadership assignment and a rare opportunity to join an organization with a compelling mission, decades of relationships, meaningful educational assets and an ambitious vision for what children, families and communities can become.

Working closely with Clark Durant — co-founder of Cornerstone and Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation — the CAO will help activate longstanding founder-, board- and institution-held relationships while progressively establishing shared institutional ownership for the future.

Why this role, why now

- A Complete Life mission that joins educational excellence, character, purpose and service.
- Six public charter schools whose students, educators and families make the philanthropic case tangible.
- Longstanding founder, board, donor, corporate and civic relationships ready for coordinated cultivation and solicitation.
- A small, skilled and committed advancement team already at work — pursuing local, regional and national grants, developing support for special project needs, and stewarding annual individual giving alongside dedicated constituents and stakeholders.
- Help serve a strong executive and senior leadership team seeking to educate 3,000 students across six campuses on an annual operating budget of \$35 million.
- An ambitious capital campaign opportunity to support educational priorities and facility improvements — grounded in disciplined readiness, validated priorities and credible donor strategy.

6	3,000+	150+	\$5M+	\$250M+
campuses across Detroit and Redford, K–12	students served across the family of schools	teachers and leaders	raised annually in grants and philanthropy	raised for the Cornerstone schools since 1991



Partner with a visionary founder. Build the culture of philanthropy. Mobilize transformational philanthropy for students, schools and the future of Greater Detroit.

MISSION

One Foundation, a broad charitable mission, multiple expressions of impact

The New Common School Foundation is the client and employer for this inaugural position. The Foundation, the Cornerstone schools and Notre Dame de Détroit each state their purpose in their own words, and a candidate should know them.

THE NEW COMMON SCHOOL FOUNDATION

“To promote excellence in public and private education — improving academic outcomes while cultivating the formation of character, all in pursuit of the Complete Life.”

CORNERSTONE SCHOOLS

“We seek for ourselves and our students to live the Complete Life — a virtuous life, a life of excellence in the unfolding of the American promise. As the Reverend Dr. King has taught us, such a life is of length, to live for a purpose; of breadth, to be a person for others; and of height, to know God.”

THE CORNERSTONE VISION

“We see transformed lives and a new city for all, rooted in the American Promise and the practice of the Complete Life, in pursuit of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.”

The Complete Life

Drawing on the teaching of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Foundation describes the Complete Life through three dimensions.

LENGTH

To live for a purpose

Why am I here? What is to be the purpose of my own life? What disciplines and habits must I develop to carry forward this purpose?

BREADTH

To be a person for others

The outward turn: responsibility for neighbors, classmates, family and community, and a life measured partly by what it does for other people.

HEIGHT

To know God

The Michigan Constitution speaks of being grateful to an Almighty God for the blessings of freedom for ourselves and our posterity and the importance of religion, morality and knowledge as being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind. This is the upward reach toward meaning larger than oneself — the dimension that gives the other two their proportion.

HOW THIS FAMILY OF MISSIONS FITS TOGETHER

The New Common School Foundation is the employer for this position, and it receives and administers charitable support for its mission.

Cornerstone Schools Foundation and **Notre Dame de Détroit** are missions of the Foundation, each with its own purpose and its own supporters. Gifts made through Cornerstone Schools Foundation go entirely to the work of the Cornerstone schools.

Cornerstone Education Group is the charter management company for six public school academies, authorized by Grand Valley State University.

Notre Dame de Détroit

Transforming hearts. Rebuilding a city.

Notre Dame de Détroit seeks to form relationships to build a culture of love. It seeks to serve the children and families of the Cornerstone schools and the families of the surrounding neighborhoods. In partnership with the Cornerstone Education Group it works to foster academic excellence and to help students and families live the Complete Life. On its own, it works with priests and religious of the Archdiocese of Detroit and with others to help make all things new again in the city and beyond. Our Lady of the Pillar is its patroness.



Notre Dame de Détroit missionaries with Cornerstone students.

Notre Dame de Détroit advances its religious and spiritual work through its own programs, privately supported activities and philanthropic channels. Their partnership rests on a shared concern for children, families, character, purpose, service and the Complete Life, and each retains its own identity, responsibilities and sources of support. All partnership activities must meet the law consistent with church-state relationships.

Three pillars of Notre Dame de Détroit

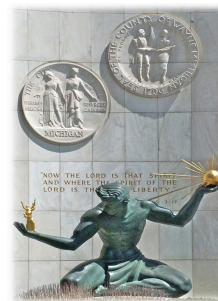
Academic — learning for success. After-school workshops, reading tutoring and homework club.

Professional — equipped for life. Technical and family-life workshops, life-skills development and tools for job searching.

Spiritual — encountering God. Discovering the Gospels, prayer and virtue workshops, growing in holiness.



The Spirit of Detroit



Marshall Fredericks' bronze has stood at the foot of Woodward Avenue since 1958. In its left hand an orb, for the God who is the source of light and life; in its right, a father, a mother and a child.

Behind it the city's and county's seal, and a fragment of Paul's letter to the Corinthians carved in marble.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

"So let our work capture this same Spirit."

NOTRE DAME DE DÉTROIT

A call to make all things new

Cornerstone began in 1991, in a city whose schools were closing, with 167 children and an idea that crossed every line it could have stayed behind.

Adam Maida arrived in Detroit as its new Archbishop in 1990. The call he issued — to help the city *make all things new again* — reached Clark Durant, and Clark answered it. Cornerstone opened its doors on a Monday in August 1991 to 167 students.

It did not open as a Catholic school. It opened as something rarer. Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal and Lutheran leaders founded it together, independent of any archdiocese — described at the time as the first school system of its kind in the country to open with the backing of both Catholic and Protestant leaders. Two of its three original campuses took over Catholic school buildings that had just closed, and gave them back to the children of the neighborhoods around them.

A year later the Partner Program began, pairing individual adults with individual children — a relationship, not a transaction. That instinct, that philanthropy here means knowing a child's name, has never left this place, and it is the instinct the next Chief Advancement Officer inherits.

INTERFAITH FROM THE FIRST DAY

This is the clearest answer to a question candidates sometimes ask. These have always been schools built by people of many convictions for children of every background, and today every seat is free and open to any child in the community.



How it became what it is

Twice in its history, Cornerstone chose reach over exclusivity. Both times it gave something up to do it. A candidate should understand that arc, because it explains precisely why this Foundation exists and what its philanthropy now has to carry.

1991–2008	Private, tuition-based and Christian. Donors bought scholarships for children whose families could not pay — roughly seventy per cent of the cost. The flagship on Nevada Street became one of the most closely watched urban schools in the country.
2009	When donor support contracted after the downturn, two campuses converted to tuition-free public charters rather than close. They became Lincoln-King Academy and Washington-Parks Academy.
2012	Madison-Carver Academy opens as a public charter; the network grows again on a new footing.
2017	The original Nevada Street campus — the school that started it all — becomes Cornerstone Jefferson-Douglass Academy, a tuition-free public school.
2018	The last private program closes. From this point every Cornerstone seat is free, and open to any child in the community.
2019	Adams-Young opens on Grove Street.
2021	Three campuses are brought under a single academy, Lincoln-King Adams-Young, with the authorizer’s approval.
TODAY	Six campuses, K–12, in Detroit and Redford Township, serving 3,000+ students.

What the arc means for philanthropy

Cornerstone can no longer sell scholarships, because there is no tuition to subsidise. Everything that makes these schools different from the per-pupil allowance — reading intervention for every child, clubs and sports at every campus, character formation woven through the school day, and the buildings that hold it — now has to be raised. That is why a Foundation stands alongside these schools.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH A FORMATIVE MISSION

The six campuses are tuition-free public schools, open to every child in the communities they serve. What distinguishes them is not who may enroll but what they set out to form. Character and academic achievement are treated as inseparable.

How the campuses are structured. They operate as Michigan public school academies under charter contracts issued by Grand Valley State University. The New Common School Foundation is a separate organization from both.

Distinct communities. One commitment to the Complete Life.

Each school brings the shared Cornerstone approach to life in a particular neighborhood and at a particular stage of a student's journey.

Adams-Young Elementary

GRADES K-5 · DETROIT



Located in the fully renovated former John King Elementary School, Adams-Young Elementary combines the renewal of a historic neighborhood building with a nurturing, rigorous learning culture. Faculty and staff emphasize individualized learning, character and early career awareness so children begin connecting their talents with purpose and possibility.

Distinctive programs: Dawn-to-Dusk before- and after-school support; technology-enabled learning; career awareness beginning in kindergarten; strong community, discipline and character culture.

Adams-Young Middle School

GRADES 6-8 · DETROIT

Adams-Young Middle School supports students through the pivotal middle grades with challenging instruction, close personal support and experiences that prepare them for high school and lifelong success. Its program pairs academics with leadership, creativity and structured opportunities to belong and contribute.



Distinctive programs: National Junior Honor Society; Principal's Club; chess; choir; dance; homework support and after-school activities.

Jefferson-Douglass Academy

GRADES K-8 · DETROIT



Situated on a 19-acre east-side campus, Jefferson-Douglass Academy provides a safe, nurturing K-8 environment where academic growth, creativity and character develop together. Its long grade span allows relationships and expectations to deepen over time while students encounter leadership, the arts and meaningful community traditions.

Distinctive programs: Detroit city-champion chess; visual arts; daily Gathering Room assembly for grades 5-8; elementary and junior high honor societies; choir.

Learning, belonging and future readiness across Detroit and Redford

Madison-Carver Academy

GRADES K-8 · DETROIT

A true neighborhood school in the Berg-Lahser community, Madison-Carver Academy emphasizes high expectations, whole-child support and a strong partnership among students, staff, families and neighbors. Its academic and extracurricular programs reinforce a culture in which students are challenged to recognize the greatness and responsibility within themselves.



Distinctive programs: Legacy Club; Junior Achievement; Husky Hero recognition; intervention blocks; National Honor Society; sports, clubs, tutoring and after-school programming.

Washington-Parks Academy

GRADES K-8 · REDFORD



Established in 2009 in Redford Township, just beyond the Detroit border, Washington-Parks Academy combines rigorous teaching with practical supports for children and families. Its programs link classroom learning, character and community responsibility while helping students develop confidence and real-world understanding.

Distinctive programs: Parent-Teacher Organization; student financial literacy and banking through Michigan First Credit Union; National Junior Honor Society; sports and after-school programming; food pantry.

Lincoln-King High School

GRADES 9-12 · DETROIT

Lincoln-King High School brings the Complete Life into focus through college preparation, career exploration, leadership and partnership. Students can pursue rigorous coursework, creative and extracurricular interests, and multiple pathways into higher education and the workforce.



Distinctive programs: Award-winning DECA; National Honor Society; athletics; choir; culinary arts; honors track; dual enrollment; an associate-degree pathway through Lawrence Technological University.

\$5M+

raised annually in grants and philanthropy

\$35M

annual operating budget across the six schools

\$250M+

raised for the Cornerstone schools since 1991

The gap

public charter funding per student falls short of both the local district and the true cost of this education

1992

the Partner Program began pairing adults with individual children

From remarkable relationships to durable institutional capacity

The corpus is here. The base of support is here. The team is here. A skilled and committed group of colleagues already does this work every day, spanning major gifts and partner engagement, institutional grants, annual and individual giving, and advancement services. This is not a function waiting to be created. Add to that a resonant mission, a respected founding leader, engaged board members, significant educational and property assets, and a story capable of inspiring consequential investment.

The incoming Chief Advancement Officer is not being brought in to rebuild what these colleagues have made. This is a deeply founder-influenced organization, in which important relationships, institutional knowledge and philanthropic practices have developed through close personal leadership over many years. What the next chapter requires is connection: bringing capable people, real relationships and proven practices into one culture of philanthropy with shared cadence, ownership and discipline — and stewarding a group of top donor prospects, many of them ready to support this mission in a far greater way.

Chief Advancement Officer

A senior executive, principal-gifts leader, institution builder and trusted philanthropic adviser.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer of the New Common School Foundation, the Chief Advancement Officer will lead advancement and philanthropy for the New Common School Foundation and the Cornerstone Education Group, respecting the distinct legal and governance responsibilities of each. This is a senior, externally engaged fundraising role. The CAO will personally cultivate and solicit consequential gifts while building the strategy, team and operating platform needed to inspire individuals, corporations, foundations and civic partners to invest in educational opportunity and the Complete Life.

The CAO will spend meaningful time in the schools and communities the role represents. Credibility will come from knowing students, families, educators, programs, neighborhoods and organizational aspirations — not only from mastering the language of fundraising.

The mandate

- Build and execute an integrated advancement strategy with clear annual and multiyear priorities.
- Personally identify, cultivate, solicit and steward principal and major gifts at a pace commensurate with an ambitious campaign.
- Develop relationship continuity and progressive co-ownership with Clark Durant through extensive joint strategy, donor engagement and solicitation.
- Expand corporate giving, foundation support, grants and individual philanthropy across faith-based and non-faith-based constituencies drawn to the educational mission.
- Strengthen portfolio management, stewardship, communications, data, reporting and advancement operations.
- Create a culture of philanthropy that engages leaders, boards, educators, staff, volunteers and partners.
- Advise candidly on opportunity, readiness, capacity, donor sentiment, risk and resource requirements.
- Raise for the Foundation's full authorized charitable portfolio — Cornerstone and its six schools as the central and immediate priority, alongside the other purposes the Foundation is authorized to support.
- Ensure every appeal, gift agreement, restriction, grant, record and impact report identifies the correct legal entity, approved purpose and recipient, so that donor intent aligns with the eventual use of funds.



Partnership with the founder, the team and the board

For more than three decades, Clark Durant has helped build relationships around a vision for children, education and the renewal of Detroit. The opportunity to work closely with this founding leader is a defining feature of the role. Those relationships are not accounts to be transferred; they are trusts to be understood, honored, activated and increasingly institutionalized.

The CAO will work side by side with the founder through a period of progressive co-ownership. Together they will shape the campaign case, prepare for donor conversations, develop relationship strategies, make visits and solicitations, capture context and commitments, and establish consistent follow-through. Over time, the CAO will become a trusted principal in these relationships while preserving Clark's continuing voice, judgment and appropriate involvement.

What successful co-ownership looks like

- Shared preparation before consequential donor and partner meetings.
- Clear roles in cultivation, solicitation, stewardship and follow-through.
- Reliable documentation of relationship history, interests, commitments and next steps.
- Respectful candor about priorities, readiness and the best use of Clark's time.
- A growing network of relationships that extends beyond any one leader or generation.

Partnership with the team and the board

This partnership does not begin and end with the founder. The Chief Advancement Officer will work alongside colleagues who hold real relationships and real expertise, an engaged board, and an existing base of support built over more than three decades. Earning the trust of those colleagues, and drawing their work into one shared plan, will matter as much to this leader's success as any single donor conversation.

Those relationships are not accounts to be transferred; they are trusts to be understood, honored, activated and increasingly institutionalized.

Continuity is not an abrupt handoff. It is a disciplined, relational process of building trust together.

People, systems and support that make philanthropy sustainable

The CAO cannot — and should not — be everything to everybody. The effectiveness of the role will depend on connecting distributed advancement practices through an operating platform that allows the CAO and other frontline leaders to spend meaningful time with donors while ensuring that research, data, proposals, gift administration, reporting and stewardship are handled consistently.

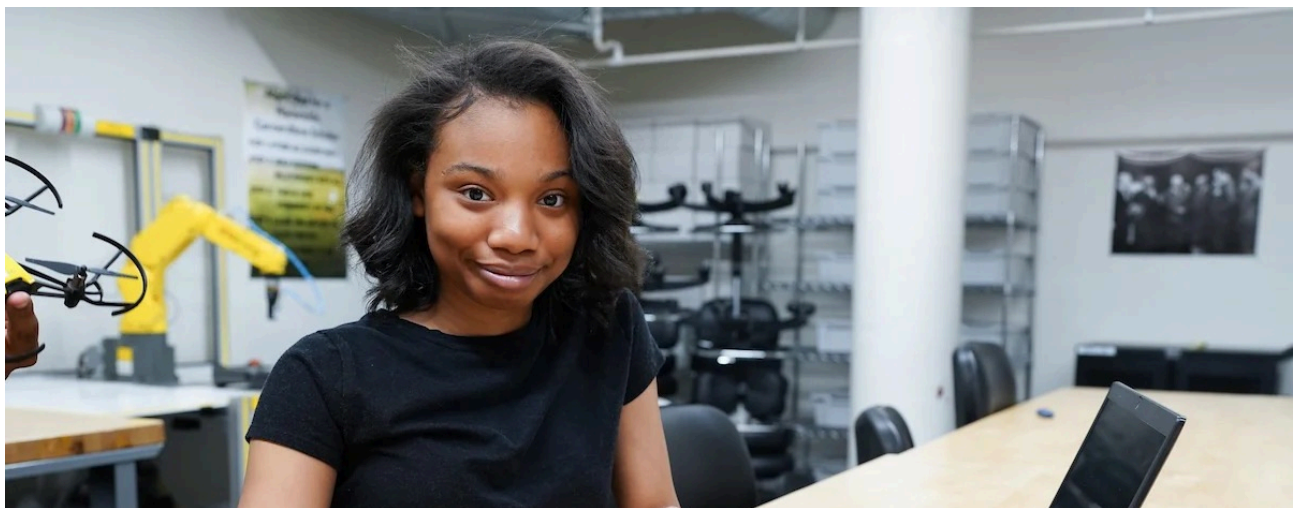
Build on what already exists

- Preserve and strengthen effective grant work while integrating it into a balanced philanthropic portfolio.
- Improve ownership and consistent use of Raiser's Edge or an appropriate successor CRM.
- Designate a capable advancement strategy and operations owner to coordinate infrastructure and execution.
- Align advancement with finance, communications, school leadership and executive decision-making.
- Recommend and build additional staff capacity when assessment, strategy and campaign demands demonstrate the need.

The CAO will have meaningful opportunity to shape the team and operating model. The final structure should follow a careful assessment of talent, workload, campaign requirements and decision rights; it should build on existing strengths while creating the integrated capacity required for sustained growth.

THE PRINCIPLE

The Chief Advancement Officer leads the advancement program. A designated operations owner builds and maintains the infrastructure that enables the work to perform.



Build readiness — and move decisively toward launch

NCSF intends to move rapidly toward an ambitious and significant capital campaign supporting the educational strength, facility improvements and long-term vitality of the six Cornerstone public charter school communities. The CAO will not begin from a standing start. Clark Durant, members of the leadership team and board, and founding corporate supporters bring established relationships across Fortune 500 companies, private foundations, civic leadership and Detroit's philanthropic community. More than **\$250 million** has been raised for the Cornerstone schools since their founding in 1991. Those relationships and that history are not commitments, but together they create an unusually credible platform for early action.

The CAO is expected to partner closely with Clark Durant and organizational leaders to build campaign discipline while fundraising. The leader will quickly validate the case, priorities, costs, prospect capacity, leadership and operating requirements while advancing high-potential relationships already in motion. Expressions of interest will not be presented as secured support. At the same time, the organization expects urgency: credible cultivation, solicitation and early leadership commitments should not wait behind a long, sequential study.

An ambitious capital campaign is being planned internally. Organizational leaders believe preliminary indications may support campaign capacity in the **\$30–\$40 million** range. That range has not yet been tested with the donors whose commitments would anchor it, and no goal has been approved — establishing that is part of what this leader is being recruited to do.

What the campaign will support

The purposes are already clear: ensuring every child learns to read by third grade and supporting older students who have fallen behind; building clubs and athletics across every school, which is what keeps children enrolled, attending and connected; weaving the formation of character into daily school life; and the facilities that hold all of it.

Readiness before launch

Confirming the range is early work for this leader — through confidential, advancing conversations with the people whose leadership commitments would anchor a campaign, alongside an assessment of priorities, costs, gift pathways and appropriate scale. That testing is done by advancing relationships, not by pausing them. That is not a gap to be hidden from a candidate — it is the work, and it is why this leader is being recruited before a campaign rather than during one.

- Clarify and prioritize the case for support — distinguishing the Foundation's institutional case, Cornerstone educational and facility priorities, any approved Notre Dame de Détroit case, and other authorized Foundation purposes.
- Establish the correct gift pathway and reporting obligation for each, and validate costs, sequencing and ownership.
- Assess constituency understanding, volunteer leadership and lead-gift potential.
- Develop realistic gift tables, pipelines, timetables and resourcing assumptions.
- Protect donor trust by distinguishing aspiration from approved campaign commitments.
- Recommend whether, when and at what scale a campaign should proceed.

The case has still to be made. Case statements, stewardship materials and campaign collateral do not yet exist in the form this work deserves. Building them — and with them a truer representation of the opportunity — is part of what this leader is being asked to do, not something waiting to be handed over.

Nor does the organization yet publish an annual report of giving. Creating one — a plain account of what was raised and what it made possible — is early work for this leader, and it is the ground on which a campaign of this ambition will stand.

A builder with executive presence, relational depth and operating discipline

The ideal candidate will be an accomplished, externally oriented advancement leader who can see the whole of the work, earn trust across varied communities and convert aspiration into gifts, systems and sustained momentum. This person will combine the drive and instincts of a principal-gifts fundraiser with the judgment of an executive, the habits of an operator and the patience of an institution builder.

Leadership characteristics

- Mission-centered and able to speak credibly about education, character, purpose, service and opportunity.
- A persuasive relationship builder with a record of personally securing major and transformational gifts.
- Experienced in building, reorganizing or professionalizing an advancement function.
- Comfortable partnering with a visionary founder, boards, executives, school leaders and civic partners.
- Operationally rigorous in prospect management, data, stewardship, reporting and ethical practice.
- A gifted writer, presenter and storyteller who can connect donors with credible human impact.
- Candid, discreet, resilient and adaptable in a dynamic, entrepreneurial environment.
- Eager to be present in the schools and communities at the heart of the mission.

Experience

Substantial senior-level experience in advancement, philanthropy, principal gifts, major gifts or campaign leadership is required, with demonstrated success personally securing significant gifts and strengthening advancement operations. Experience preparing for and leading a comprehensive or capital campaign is required. Foundation, grantmaking, restricted-fund or complex multi-entity experience is strongly preferred. A bachelor's degree is required; an advanced degree and the CFRE designation are preferred.



Eager to be present in the schools and communities at the heart of the mission.

Listen, organize, engage — and establish momentum

- Complete an accelerated assessment of people, portfolios, systems, grants, commitments, donor relationships and readiness while beginning coordinated engagement with the highest-potential prospects.
- Build a close working partnership with Clark Durant and strong relationships with NCSF leadership, Cornerstone Education Group leaders, school principals, advancement colleagues and key partners.
- Enter the life of the six Cornerstone campuses, the Notre Dame de Détroit community and the other work the Foundation supports — and shape an evidence-based case around students, families, educational priorities, facilities and community impact.
- Advance a focused portfolio of principal and major-gift relationships with Clark and other relationship leaders, converting existing relationship capital into qualified strategies, visits, solicitations and early commitments while broadening momentum across corporate philanthropy, foundations, grants, families and individual giving.
- Validate campaign priorities, scale, sequence, leadership and resourcing quickly; recommend a credible goal range; and, with governing approval, move decisively into a leadership or quiet phase rather than waiting for a conventional public launch.
- Institutionalize donor knowledge and demonstrate progressive co-ownership of key relationships.

HOW SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED

Success in the first year will be measured by dollars raised and leadership commitments secured, as well as by the quality of relationships, clarity of priorities, credibility of the case, strength of the operating platform and momentum toward a sustainable advancement culture.

A confidential national search led by ACELA Solutions

The New Common School Foundation has retained ACELA Solutions to conduct a national search for its inaugural Chief Advancement Officer. The anticipated base salary will be commensurate with experience, plus benefits; the successful candidate may also be eligible for a performance incentive under terms approved and documented by the Foundation, consistent with all standards in the development and advancement profession. All inquiries, nominations and applications will be managed with confidentiality and professional discretion.

To apply

Candidates are invited to submit the following materials as separate PDF attachments:

- A letter of interest describing what draws you to the mission, Detroit and this culture-building opportunity.
- A current resume or curriculum vitae with all relevant positions and dates.
- A brief advancement leadership statement addressing relationship-based philanthropy, institution building and major-gift leadership.
- Five professional references, including names, relationships, phone numbers and email addresses. References will not be contacted without the candidate's prior knowledge and approval.

Please submit all materials in one email and include **"NCSF Chief Advancement Officer"** in the subject line.

INQUIRIES, NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

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ABOUT ACELA SOLUTIONS

ACELA Solutions secures exceptional leaders, strengthens teams and provides strategic guidance to help mission- and values-centered organizations thrive.

ACELA approaches executive search as a high-trust partnership grounded in mission, relationships and stewardship — walking with clients and candidates through discernment, decision and transition.

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Photography courtesy of the Cornerstone school communities