



St John's College, Oxford

Director of Development

Candidate Information pack

January 2026





Introduction from our President

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of Development at St John's College, Oxford. This appointment comes at a defining moment for the College, and I hope this letter conveys both a sense of the opportunity and the ambition behind it.

St John's is an academically exceptional, financially strong, and unusually broad college. We teach and research across more than thirty subjects, and we are deeply committed to sustaining that breadth with the arts and humanities alongside scientific and social scientific excellence. Our strength and stability mean that we are not fundraising out of necessity. Rather, we are fundraising because we have the confidence to be ambitious about our future.

Over many years, St John's has not relied heavily on a formal development operation. That history is important context. It means that this role is not simply about inheriting an established fundraising machine, but about shaping and leading a modern, values-driven development and alumni relations function that reflects who we are today and who we want to become.

At the heart of this opportunity is a simple but powerful belief: philanthropy flows from belonging. Our alumni are not simply potential donors; they are members of a lifelong community. We care deeply about their engagement with the College – their networks, their mentoring, their advocacy, and their sense of allegiance, and we see financial support as one expression of that relationship, not the starting or end point.

We are about to launch a new strategic plan, developed thoughtfully and collaboratively across the College. This plan sets out clear academic and institutional priorities, from excellence in learning, teaching and research, to support for early-career academics and postdoctoral researchers, to graduate scholarships and access. The Director of Development will play a central role in translating that strategy into compelling philanthropic propositions, aligned with academic values and long-term impact.

Over time, we believe St John's has the potential to embark on a major fundraising campaign at a scale commensurate with our standing and aspirations. But alongside our ambition, we are also realistic and careful. We value judgement, integrity and stewardship. We want to build donor communities we can sustain – people who are inspired by and respect the work we do, our Fellows, and the intellectual life of the College, and who choose to support us because they believe in our vision.

This is a role for someone with substance as well as confidence: a relationships-driven leader who can combine strategic clarity with warmth, credibility with creativity, and ambition with care. You will be working closely with me, Fellows, senior colleagues, and an engaged governing body, in a collegiate environment that values partnership and thoughtful challenge.

If you are excited by the prospect of shaping not just a fundraising programme, but a culture of engagement and philanthropy that will define St John's for decades to come, I very much hope you will consider applying.

With best wishes,

Professor Lady Sue Black
President, St John's College, Oxford



About Us

Founded in 1555 by Sir Thomas White, St John's College, Oxford is one of the University's largest and most intellectually wide-ranging colleges, with a long tradition of academic excellence across the humanities, sciences and social sciences. The College teaches one of the broadest ranges of subjects in Oxford, with more than 30 disciplines currently represented, and remains deeply committed to sustaining this breadth as a core strength.

We are an independent, self-governing institution and a full member of the University of Oxford's collegiate system. The College is home to around 700 undergraduate and postgraduate students, supported by a Fellowship of approximately 100 academics, including 61 members of the Governing Body, which has overall responsibility for the governance of the College.

Academically ambitious, financially strong and outward-looking, St John's benefits from a significant endowment and long-term stability. This enables the College to focus not on short-term financial pressures, but on thoughtful investment in excellence: in teaching, research, access and people. Particular priority is given to supporting early-career academics and graduate students, maintaining strength in the arts and humanities alongside scientific disciplines, and ensuring that talent can flourish regardless of background.

St John's is a vibrant, international and socially diverse collegiate community, characterised by a strong sense of identity and belonging. It is particularly recognised for its innovative and pioneering Inspire access and outreach programmes. Through its teaching and research, St John's seeks to transform lives and to have a positive impact on society locally, nationally and internationally, recognising both the privilege and the responsibility that accompany its position and resources.

Further information about the College can be found at www.sjc.ox.ac.uk.





The Opportunity

This is a pivotal moment for St John's College. The appointment of a new Director of Development coincides with the development and launch of a new strategic plan and the College's ambition to embark on a step-change in its philanthropic activity, including a £100m fundraising campaign.

The strategy will build on the academic excellence of the College. The main pillars of the strategy are academic achievement in learning, teaching and research; engagement with all of our communities, and infrastructure that is well-maintained and guided by principles of environmental sustainability. The strategy includes a major expansion of our provision for students and early-career academics and an ambitious architectural masterplan. The postholder will be responsible for leading the emerging development strategy to ensure the College secures the financial support required to enable the College to achieve its ambitions in these areas.

Historically, St John's has not relied heavily on fundraising. The College has operated in a stable cost environment and has not previously built a fully developed, professionalised development and alumni relations function. That context makes this opportunity distinctive: the incoming Director is not simply being asked to run a campaign, but to build a modern development and alumni relations operation that reflects the College's values, scale and ambitions.

At the heart of this opportunity is a clear philosophical shift. Fundraising at St John's is not conceived as transactional or purely financial. The College's leadership is explicit that philanthropy should flow from belonging, allegiance and engagement. Alumni are seen first as members of a lifelong community – individuals whose networks, mentoring, advocacy and intellectual connection to the College matter as much as their financial support.





Job description

Job title:	Director of Development
Reports to:	President of the College
Direct reports:	Deputy Director of Development, Associate Development Director, and Deputy Director of Alumni Engagement

Role purpose

The postholder will report to the President of the College but will be accountable to Governing Body, and report directly to the Development and Alumni Relations Committee. The Development Team consists of seven people including two Deputy Directors, one for Development and one for Alumni Engagement, and a recently appointed Associate Director for Principal Gifts. The postholder will be expected to work collaboratively with the Senior Tutor and Principal Bursar, as well as Fellows and other members of professional staff.

The postholder will be a Trustee of the College, and will be required to fulfil the responsibilities of a Charity Trustee on Governing Body. The postholder will be a Senior Manager and will contribute towards the effectiveness of the professional staff teams.

Main responsibilities

Strategy

- Implement and report on the emerging development strategy in support of the College's ten-year strategy, working with relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- Play a central role in articulating the College's vision and strategic priorities in a way that is compelling to potential major donors, alumni and others.

Fundraising

- Working with the Deputy Development Directors and Associate Director, lead the identification, in-person cultivation and ongoing stewardship of major donors in conjunction with the President and others as appropriate.
- Set annual fundraising targets for relevant members of staff in the Development Office and deliver a significant personal annual fundraising target.
- Advise on the remit and membership of fundraising and/or campaign boards as required, and personally lead in establishing and maintaining such groups.
- Ensure that the College is well positioned, with the expertise, networks and resources, to identify, research, cultivate and solicit prospective donors.
- Manage a portfolio of prospects and donors, and support the Deputy Development Director and Associate Director in managing their portfolios/major gift programme.
- Oversee and participate fully in the College's programme of fundraising and stewardship events, in the College and wider University.
- Work with the Deputy Development Director to oversee the regular giving programmes and the legacy programme.
- Support the Associate Director Principal Gifts to pursue and secure donations from non-alumni (trusts, foundations, corporates and individual philanthropists).
- Ensure that high standards of stewardship are in place for current and potential donors, including appropriate donor recognition mechanisms (in agreement with Governing Body).



Job description

Alumni engagement

- With the Deputy Development Director, develop and oversee an active programme of alumni engagement activities and events, recognising the varying needs and expectations of alumni and reflecting best practice.
- Maintain visibility and presence with the College's alumni communities in the UK and worldwide.
- Working with the President, organise and participate in overseas visits to engage with alumni.
- Steer and oversee alumni communications of all types to ensure they are of a high standard, and enable effective ongoing engagement.
- Ensure a compliant, accurate and comprehensive database of alumni is maintained and further developed where appropriate.

College and University engagement

- Build and maintain good relationships across the Fellowship, so that Fellows can support with alumni and fundraising activities as and when appropriate.
- Work closely with the Senior Tutor to ensure that donations are shaped and steered to meet educational priorities.
- Build understanding among the wider professional staff of the College about the critical importance of alumni engagement and fundraising for our reputation, relationships and reach, and the contribution staff can and do make in this regard.
- Develop and maintain familiarity with the history and traditions of the College, and with current teaching, research, trends, successes and challenges.
- Represent the interests of the College in the intercollegiate University in relevant Committees and groups, and maintain good relations with the University and other colleges' development offices.

Finance, compliance and reporting

- Be accountable for the Development Office budget.
- Set clear and measurable performance metrics for the activities of the Development Office and report against them.
- Ensure that all donations to the College are appropriately documented and clearly communicated to other offices in the College as necessary, including through donor agreements or other mechanisms, so that the nature, purpose and conditions applying to donations are clear; and ensure that gift management, accounting and reporting is diligent, timely and accurate.
- Produce an Annual Report for Development Board, Development and Alumni Relations Committee and Governing Body, which includes activities and results for the previous year and plans for the forthcoming year.
- Ensure timely and accurate completion of reporting returns to University or intercollegiate bodies as required.
- Maintain knowledge of effective giving methods in the UK and overseas (including tax considerations, legal, regulatory and audit requirements).

Management

- Provide leadership direction and senior management support for the Development Office team.
- Ensure that the team have clearly defined objectives and targets, and provide them with the support and direction to enable successful achievement.
- Work effectively as part of the Senior Management Team for professional staff, and operate in a cross-College capacity as and when required.

The above list is not exhaustive and the Director of Development is expected to carry out such other duties as the College may from time to time request, commensurate with the grade and responsibilities of the post. The list of duties may be varied without changing the essential character of the post according to the needs of the College.



Person specification

Knowledge and experience

- Outstanding major gifts fundraiser, ideally with campaign experience, and a significant track record of fundraising at a senior level
- A proven track record of consistently securing six- and seven-figure gifts
- Extensive experience of donor stewardship and engagement
- Excellent leadership skills, demonstrating a collaborative approach to motivating others and to achieving results in a highly professional, high-performing team
- Demonstrable ability to enable continual improvement through effective management and development of people, systems and processes

Skills and abilities

- Excellent interpersonal skills, personable and capable of building and developing relationships at every level
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, written and verbal
- Ability to undertake overseas travel as required for development events and meetings
- Ability to work flexibly outside of typical office hours, including attendance at evening and weekend functions, as reasonably required
- Experience of working with volunteers, alumni or donor development boards
- Able to meet the fit and proper requirements for becoming a charity Trustee (<https://www.gov.uk/become-charity-trustee>)
- Good IT skills (Microsoft, CRM databases and systems)

Styles and behaviours

- Highest standards of personal integrity, discretion, loyalty and commitment
- Dynamic and proactive individual who inspires the confidence, enthusiasm and support of colleagues and donors

Desirable

- Experience of leading a large fundraising campaign
- Ability to work through complex governance structures and familiarity with committee procedure and decision-making
- Educated to degree level



Terms of appointment

Salary

The salary for this role is c£100,000 per annum on a full-time permanent basis. The successful applicant is expected to take up the post as soon as possible.

Location

St John's College, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3JP

This is a full-time post at 35 hours per week. Normal hours of work are between 8:30am – 5.30pm, with one unpaid hour for lunch. Some flexibility will be required according to the needs of the College, including some evenings and occasional weekend working. Staff are expected to work in the office four days a week during term time and three days a week in non-term time.

The College can provide a relocation allowance of a maximum of £8,000. This is a tax-free allowance provided it is spent by the end of the tax year following the year of appointment.

It is intended to cover the move of one household. In order to be eligible, the appointed candidate will need to be moving from more than 25 miles away from the College to within 25 miles of the College (OX1 3JP).

Pension

The post is pensionable under the contributable Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) which is a mixed defined benefit and defined contribution scheme.

Annual leave

Annual leave entitlement is 30 working days, of which 5 are to be taken during the Christmas break when the administrative offices are closed, plus 8 statutory bank holidays. Bank holidays that fall within term time may need to be worked. If this is the case, a day of paid holiday in lieu of each such day worked will be given. The holiday year begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December. Annual leave would normally be expected to be taken outside of standard term times (Weeks 0–9).

Additional benefits

Medical insurance

The postholder is eligible to participate in the private medical insurance scheme. The College will pay the premium, but this constitutes a taxable benefit. Family members may be enrolled at extra cost to the postholder.

Meals

The post holder will become a member of the Senior Common Room and will have full lunch and dining rights.



How to apply

We hope you will consider making an application. To apply, please go to the [Starfish Search website here](#) and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than two sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We would also be grateful if you would complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date: Friday 27th February 2026

Preliminary interviews: Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th March 2026

First stage Final Panel interviews: Friday 13th March 2026

Second stage Final Panel interviews: Tuesday 17th March 2026

