

Aria Heath

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SUMMARY

Principal gifts executive with more than 17 years of progressive fundraising experience across academic medicine, **higher education**, and complex nonprofit advancement. Built **transformational gift strategies**, closed **multiple seven and eight figure commitments**, and connected research, patient care, medical education, innovation, and entrepreneurship with compelling philanthropic opportunities. Trusted advisor to senior leaders, faculty, clinicians, volunteers, donors, alumni, and advancement colleagues, with experience directing principal gift portfolios, capital campaign strategy, prospect coordination, stewardship, and program evaluation. Leads with careful listening, sound judgment, clear communication, and practical coaching. Uses databases, spreadsheets, web applications, and **complex information systems** to guide portfolio decisions and performance review. Brings credibility in confidential donor relationships, sophisticated negotiations, executive engagement, and staff leadership, helping mission driven institutions secure lasting philanthropic support.

EXPERIENCE

Vice President, Principal and Transformational Giving

January 2022 - Present

Lakeshore Medical University Foundation

Milwaukee, WI

Lead principal and transformational giving across academic medicine, partnering with executives, faculty, clinicians, volunteers, and advancement colleagues. Direct sophisticated prospect strategy, capital priorities, donor engagement, stewardship, staff coaching, and performance review while protecting confidential information and connecting philanthropy with research, patient care, education, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

- Built seven and eight figure gift strategies linking donor interests with research and **patient care** priorities.
- Advised executives and clinicians before donor meetings, giving each conversation a clear philanthropic purpose.
- Coached **principal gifts staff** through qualification, cultivation, negotiation, and closing of **complex commitments**.
- Used database and spreadsheet analysis to refine portfolios, **benchmarks**, forecasts, and prospect movement.
- Coordinated **affiliated advancement teams** around campaign priorities, **communications**, stewardship, and senior volunteer engagement.
- Prepared confidential briefings that helped leaders make timely decisions during sensitive negotiations.

Executive Director, Principal Gifts

July 2017 - December 2021

Great Plains University Advancement

Des Moines, IA

Directed principal gifts and capital campaign work for a comprehensive university advancement program. Managed high value portfolios, executive and volunteer partnerships, prospect coordination, stewardship, proposal development, and gift negotiations, translating institutional priorities into persuasive opportunities for regional and **national philanthropists**.

- Led capital campaign portfolio reviews that clarified next actions for **senior officers** and **volunteers**.
- Closed sophisticated **principal gifts** by matching donor priorities with university **research** and education initiatives.
- Coached colleagues on discovery questions, listening, proposal framing, negotiation, and donor follow through.
- Created executive briefings that connected prospect history, capacity, relationships, and institutional priorities.
- Strengthened **stewardship** plans through coordinated updates, faculty engagement, and meaningful donor recognition.
- Organized cross team prospect reviews that improved accountability across affiliated advancement operations.

Senior Director, Major and Principal Gifts

June 2013 - June 2017

Heartland Health Sciences Foundation

Omaha, NE

Managed major and principal gift portfolios supporting **health sciences** research, clinical care, and medical education. Partnered with researchers, clinicians, administrators, alumni, donors, and volunteers to shape gift concepts, cultivate relationships, secure commitments, and sustain thoughtful stewardship.

- Developed gift concepts connecting philanthropic interests with **clinical care**, research, and **medical education**.
- Guided faculty and **clinicians** through donor conversations that turned technical priorities into clear human impact.
- Negotiated **complex commitments** with donors, advisors, executives, and institutional counsel during campaign planning.
- Maintained disciplined portfolio records using advancement databases, spreadsheets, and information **systems**.
- Produced persuasive proposals and briefing materials for regional and national philanthropists.
- Built stewardship touchpoints that kept donors connected with outcomes after major commitments closed.

Director of Development

June 2009 - May 2013

Midwest College Foundation

Cedar Rapids, IA

Directed development activity for a higher education foundation, managing major gifts, alumni engagement, advancement databases, proposals, and stewardship. Built relationships with alumni, volunteers, faculty, **administrators**, and **donors** while strengthening organized prospect movement and clear written communication.

- Expanded major gift conversations through alumni research, thoughtful outreach, and focused qualification.
- Prepared donor proposals that connected college priorities with personal interests and community needs.

- Improved database documentation so **advancement colleagues** could act on current relationship information.
- Coordinated **faculty** and volunteer participation during cultivation visits and **stewardship** events.
- Created concise briefing materials for leaders preparing for donor meetings and solicitations.
- Strengthened **alumni** engagement by pairing meaningful updates with timely opportunities for involvement.

PROJECTS

Academic Medicine Transformational Giving Initiative 📅 2024

Coordinated executives, clinicians, researchers, and advancement colleagues around a transformational giving initiative. Shared donor insight across teams, shaped opportunities around patient care and innovation, and supported thoughtful stewardship after commitments were secured.

Capital Campaign Principal Gifts Portfolio 📅 2020

Partnered with senior officers, volunteers, faculty, and donors during a capital campaign portfolio effort. Clarified prospect strategy, prepared executive conversations, and helped move sophisticated opportunities from cultivation through negotiation and close.

LEADERSHIP & AWARDS

- Recognized for closing multiple seven and eight figure philanthropic commitments across academic medicine and higher education.
- Selected to advise senior executives, faculty, clinicians, volunteers, and advancement colleagues on complex principal gift strategy.
- Promoted through progressive fundraising leadership roles spanning development, health sciences, university advancement, and transformational giving.

EDUCATION

Master of Public Administration

2009

University of Wisconsin Madison GPA: 4.0

Madison, WI

Coursework: Nonprofit leadership, public finance, organizational strategy, program evaluation

Bachelor's Degree in Communication

2007

University of Iowa GPA: 4.0

Iowa City, IA

Coursework: Persuasive communication, organizational communication, research methods, professional writing

CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Fund Raising Executive 📅 2012
- Advanced Fundraising Leadership Certificate 📅 2024

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- **Fundraising Systems:** Raiser’s Edge, Salesforce, advancement databases
- **Spreadsheet Applications:** Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, pivot tables
- **Web Applications:** Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, web portals
- **Campaign Management:** Capital campaigns, campaign planning, campaign benchmarks
- **Prospect Research:** Prospect screening, capacity analysis, relationship mapping
- **Gift Administration:** Gift agreements, commitment documentation, gift compliance
- **Donor Communications:** Proposal writing, briefing materials, stewardship reports
- **Academic Medicine:** Research philanthropy, patient care, medical education
- **Leadership Practice:** Executive advising, staff coaching, volunteer engagement
- **Project Management:** Milestone planning, stakeholder coordination, performance evaluation
- **Relationship Management:** Face to face visits, cultivation, solicitation
- **Information Management:** Confidential records, portfolio reporting, data governance

SKILLS

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|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Principal gifts | • Academic medicine | • Donor stewardship | • Fundraising databases |
| • Transformational philanthropy | • Prospect strategy | • Executive advising | • Spreadsheet analysis |
| • Capital campaigns | • Donor cultivation | • Staff coaching | • Written communication |
| • Gift negotiation | • Gift solicitation | • Portfolio analysis | |

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Council for Advancement and Support of Education, professional member focused on higher education advancement.

- Association of Fundraising Professionals, professional member supporting ethical fundraising and nonprofit leadership.

LANGUAGES

- English (Native)
- Spanish (Intermediate)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Work Status : Authorized to work in United States. No sponsorship required.

REFERENCES

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST