

Aria Heath

Assistant Vice President, Principal Gifts

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STRENGTHS

- 🎯 **Principal Gift Strategy**
Connected donor interests with research, care, and education priorities, giving senior leaders a clear path forward.
- 👥 **Executive Partnership**
Prepared executives and clinicians for important donor conversations, and became a trusted sounding board before visits.
- 🗣️ **Gift Negotiation**
Handled sophisticated commitments with patience and clear listening, helping donors and institutions reach sound agreements.
- 🗣️ **Team Coaching**
Coached colleagues through difficult prospect moments, sharing practical guidance that made complex work feel manageable.
- ♥️ **Stewardship**
Kept donors connected after closing through relevant updates, personal follow up, and visible institutional progress.

SKILLS

Principal gifts

Transformational philanthropy

Capital campaigns Gift negotiation

Academic medicine

Prospect strategy

Donor cultivation Gift solicitation

Donor stewardship

Executive advising Staff coaching

Portfolio analysis

Fundraising databases

Spreadsheet analysis

Written communication

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

Lakeshore Medical University Foundation 📅 January 2022 - Present 📍 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

Great Plains University Advancement 📅 July 2017 - December 2021 📍 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.

LANGUAGES

English	Native
Spanish	Intermediate

MY CAREER



- Vice President, Principal and Transformational Giving at Lakeshore Medical University Foundation (4.7 Years)
- Executive Director, Principal Gifts at Great Plains University Advancement (4.4 Years)
- Senior Director, Major and Principal Gifts at Heartland Health Sciences Foundation (4 Years)
- Director of Development at Midwest College Foundation (3.9 Years)

Senior Director, Major and Principal Gifts

Heartland Health Sciences Foundation 📅 June 2013 - June 2017 📍 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

Midwest College Foundation 📅 June 2009 - May 2013 📍 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

University of Wisconsin Madison 🎓 GPA: 4.0 📅 2009 📍 Madison, WI

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

Bachelor's Degree in Communication

University of Iowa 🎓 GPA: 4.0 📅 2007 📍 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

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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

REFERENCES

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST