



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO) POSITION PROFILE

ABOUT KC SCHOLARS

Kansas City (KC) Scholars' mission is to increase postsecondary education attainment by providing the means – through scholarships, financial incentives to promote college savings, and support services – for low- and modest-income students and adults to complete a postsecondary credit-bearing credential or degree. Achieving this mission will change lives, set in place a culture of postsecondary completion, and increase the region's workforce pipeline and economic vitality.

From the beginning, KC Scholars was planned and is now implemented as a community asset. It creates a robust college-going culture across the region and is among Kansas City's most prized and transformative programs. Its roots are in one man's commitment to postsecondary education as a life-changer: Ewing Marion Kauffman, an entrepreneur and humanitarian whose innovative and long-lasting contributions have benefited millions of people in Kansas City and the nation.

Mr. Kauffman's vision was to ensure a postsecondary education was possible for everyone, regardless of income, age, race, or ethnicity. The Kauffman Foundation sought to continue this legacy and gift the community with a large-scale scholarship and support program to serve many across the broad region.

KC Scholars started as a community-engaged process: over 70 members of the regional community helped plan KC Scholars – their experiences and expertise shaped the program as it stands today.

As such, the goals of KC Scholars are to:

- Increase postsecondary educational attainment in the greater Kansas City area
- Achieve a 75% degree or credit-bearing credential completion rate
- Increase economic independence for individuals in the program
- Connect Scholars to career preparation opportunities in the region and to the regional workforce pipeline to achieve 80% of Scholar graduates remaining in the region to live and work

In less than five years, KC Scholars has experienced widespread community engagement and rapid scaling. KC Scholars is on the path to near 10,000 Scholars by 2022 and is projected to grow to near 15,000 by 2027.

Organizational Structure

KC Scholars is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, which provides overall strategic direction and oversight to the CEO and organization. It has 20 full-time staff and an annual operating budget of over \$9.5 million. For additional information, please visit <https://kcscholars.org>.

THE POSITION

KC Scholars' Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") will provide strategic vision and leadership on governance, mission, programs, and operations. They will ensure the organization's financial stability and long-term viability, build, lead, motivate, and retain high-performing staff and board members, and enhance the organizational culture.

The CEO will oversee all of KC Scholars' activities and operations, raise the organization's profile and visibility, diversify funding, and build relationships with corporations, diverse people, communities, and an array of stakeholders to advance the organization's mission, strategic priorities, and make a meaningful impact. They will also serve as an organizational spokesperson.

The ideal candidate is a bold, creative, and inspirational leader with excellent organizational and relationship management capabilities, compelling communication skills, strong fundraising, and staff and board management abilities.

A successful candidate must also demonstrate the presence, maturity, compassion, and energy to work effectively with and inspire a diverse community of partners and stakeholders.

KC Scholars' Board of Directors is deeply committed to the organization's mission. It seeks a leader with whom they can partner, whose vision and passion generate followership and enthusiasm for inclusion.

Specific Responsibilities

In partnership with the KC Scholars' Board of Directors and staff, during the next three to five years, the new CEO will be expected to:

Increase the Region's Postsecondary Attainment Rate

The current postsecondary attainment rate for the region is 43%; KC Scholars can increase the region's attainment rate by an estimated 5%. The impact on the low-income and people of color is even more profound. As the trend set in KC Scholars' first five award cycles continues, the number of Black and Latino students in the region who enroll in college could grow by 13%.

The next CEO will be instrumental in this growth, changing thousands of individual lives and supporting the region's transformation by preparing a future workforce and contributing to the regional economy.

Build the Roadmap to Achieving the Goals of Increasing Economic Independence for Individuals in the Program and 80% of Scholar Graduates to Remain in the Kansas City Region to Live and Work

The CEO will have the opportunity to shape and enhance the impact of KC Scholars as a workforce pipeline program and equip Scholars with the means to gain economic independence.

They will drive the plan of action to achieve these strategic goals by forming relationships with key corporate leaders to support hiring programs throughout the region and support students seeking market-demanded stackable credentials.

Enhance Revenue Through Community Partners

KC Scholars benefits from \$100 million of invested assets from the Kauffman Foundation and nearly 300 external individual, foundation, and corporate donors that support the number of scholarship awards made annually.

The CEO will be responsible for developing additional revenue through cultivating and retaining relationships with potential and current community donors and being integral to securing state and national funding support while maintaining and growing the regional donor base.

They will lead efforts underway to achieve an ambitious goal to significantly expand corporate and philanthropic support that will enable KC Scholars to match funds that have been committed and dramatically extend its support to more eligible students.

The position location is Kansas City, Missouri.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Education: A doctoral, master's, or bachelor's degree or equivalent years of related professional experience in business or nonprofit leadership required.

Experience: Ten plus years of progressive management experience, including leading large teams, budgets, and operations within a complex nonprofit or business enterprise. Candidates must have experience relevant to KC Scholars' mission and proven ability to partner with a board of directors to develop and articulate a path forward for a complex, high-impact community asset and galvanize the organization and stakeholders behind a vision for its future.

COMPETENCIES AND ATTRIBUTES

The successful candidate **will be:**

- Passionate about KC Scholars' mission and values
- A strategic and visionary leader with unquestionable integrity; secure and willing to listen, ask questions, comfortable not having all the answers; inclusive in decision making, able to make tough decisions, take a stand, and act appropriately
- Relationship-oriented, collaborative, and capable of building partnerships with individuals, communities, corporations, nonprofits, educational institutions, policymakers, funders, and other key stakeholders
- Culturally competent, with an appreciation of and comfort level working with a wide array of diverse individuals and communities
- A capable fundraiser with a proven record of success or demonstrated aptitude

- Creative, inspirational, motivating, and supportive of staff, board, and stakeholders
- Savvy, driven, innovative, and engaging
- Well-organized, with the ability to prioritize what is essential, which can shift by the day
- Diplomatic, compassionate, trustworthy, authentic, and transparent
- Flexible, adaptable, and pragmatic

The successful candidate **will have:**

- Knowledge to increase KC Scholars' visibility and influence to advance its mission and drive impact regionally and statewide
- Ability to engage in and think critically about systems-level analysis and problem-solving
- A growth mindset with a proven ability to lead and guide an organization through change and evolution
- Excellent leadership, relationship, and people management skills
- Business and financial acumen, experience in strategic planning with the successful execution of one or more bold, aspirational plans
- Ability to be strategic and a hands-on executor
- Excellent writing and speaking skills
- Confidence, professional credibility, executive polish, and the ability to be "the face" of the organization
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Ability to collaborate effectively with multiple stakeholders, including staff, board, donors, funders, partner organizations, and community stakeholders
- Emotional intelligence, maturity, humility, and excellent judgment

The ideal candidate **will have:**

- Strong ties to the Kansas City community and practical experience working in communities and with organizations relevant to KC Scholars' mission
- A wide range of content knowledge on postsecondary access and completion challenges and financial aid and scholarship management
- An understanding of, or interest in, place-based focused work and expressed interest in systemic change related to equitable education outcomes leading to viable careers

COMPENSATION

A competitive compensation and benefits package will be offered commensurate with experience. KC Scholars is an Equal Opportunity Employer, welcoming people to flourish in an open and inclusive work environment. For additional information about the opportunity, please contact:

LISA FISHER
Principal
301-273-7074
lfisher@lafsearch.net
www.lafsearch.net