



Murray Edwards College
University of Cambridge

Candidate Information Pack Director of Development and Alumnae Relations

May 2026





Welcome from Dr Rachel Polonsky

Dear Prospective Candidate

Thank you for your interest in this important senior role at Murray Edwards College. I hope what you read and hear about us will encourage you to apply to join us, and to bring with you the vision and ambition to thrive in our vibrant community.

Our College is a heroic story of women's enterprise, intellectual accomplishment, and independence. Taking its proud place among the 31 colleges in the University of Cambridge, Murray Edwards has a style of its own, a fresh and contemporary interpretation of the ancient traditions of collegiate life and learning.

We are an industrious community, dedicated to education, learning and research, and to all the pursuits that enrich the experience of university life: sports, the arts, friendship, and having fun.

I have been here since 2011 and may be biased, but I think ours is the most interesting of all the Cambridge colleges! Our buildings are renowned masterpieces of mid 20th century brutalist architecture and 2026 is their 60th birthday, which we will celebrate in our *Sixties Renaissance* symposium and events this September. Their grace and lightness, and the flowing abundance of our hilltop gardens, provide an inspiring environment for the personal growth and academic flourishing of every one of our students.

Our students speak of the legendary Dome – our unique interpretation of a Cambridge dining hall - as 'home'. They love working at their laptops in the Art Café looking out over Fountain Court, or late into the night in the Rosemary Murray Library, one of the most beautiful and tranquil study spaces in all of Cambridge. They appreciate living in a unique kind of museum, the widely renowned Women's Art Collection, with wonderful paintings and sculptures across the College creating an exceptional setting for daily life. They describe the happy feeling of coming back to their cool, cosy women's college after lectures and events in the mixed environment of the University.

Our Charter decrees that there shall be no "test of a religious, racial, political or social character" for membership of the College. Since the start, we have welcomed and championed diversity, openness, and freedom of expression.

For the years ahead, as we build on our core principles, true to the intrepid spirit of the outstanding women who gave us our foundation, we have splendid plans to transform our campus and to increase our support for our students and Fellowship to achieve their full potential.

We are in the foothills of the College's most ambitious fundraising campaign that will provide light and airy new student spaces, create a dedicated art gallery for our world class collection, give more back to our local Cambridge community and increase provision for student support and academic impact. We will also build the College's endowment to ensure future generations of students, academics and professional staff can enjoy the benefits of this unique Cambridge college, and take its spirit of achievement, style and creativity into the world.

Murray Edwards has the ability to attract and forge strong relationships with its students, alumnae, colleagues and external supporters. I particularly enjoy this aspect of my role, and am delighted to be continuing in post until 30 September 2027. I very much look forward to working with our next Director of Development to help realise together the College's exciting next chapter of transformation and change.

With my best wishes,

Dr Rachel Polonsky
Acting President



About Murray Edwards

Murray Edwards College is a place shaped by ambition, creativity and a strong sense of community. Since its foundation in 1954, the College has championed opportunities for women and built an environment where students can flourish academically while feeling supported, inspired and at home. The atmosphere here is open, modern and friendly, with a shared commitment to learning, wellbeing and mutual respect.

We are a vibrant and forward-thinking college, and we value every member of our community. Students, academics and professional staff all play an important role in College life, and we take pride in being a relaxed, welcoming and genuinely collaborative place to work. Our beautiful, light-filled buildings sit within spacious gardens that everyone is encouraged to enjoy. As one of the Hill Colleges, we are close enough to the city centre to feel connected, yet set apart just enough to offer a peaceful and green environment.

The College is home to c.350 undergraduate students, c.260 postgraduate (including clinical students) and about 200 Fellows and staff.

The Governing Body, comprising the President and Fellows, holds the ultimate authority in the governance of the College. It delegates the day-to-day management of the College's affairs to Council. The College Council is chaired by the President and its members are charity trustees, responsible for ensuring compliance with charity law. Council comprises the President, the Vice President, the Senior Tutor, the Bursar, nine Fellows elected by the Governing Body, and two student members representing the postgraduate and undergraduate communities.

A defining feature of Murray Edwards is The Women's Art Collection, the largest collection of modern and contemporary art by women in Europe. Works by Eileen Cooper, Tracey Emin, Elisabeth Frink, Guerilla Girls, Maggie Hambling, Barbara Hepworth, Lubaina Himid, Paula Rego, Bridget Riley, Rose Wylie and many others are displayed throughout the College, celebrating the voices and achievements of women artists and creating an inspiring backdrop to everyday life. The College's striking modernist architecture also adds to the uplifting feel of the campus, bringing in natural light and creating spaces designed for study, conversation and connection.

Our community of distinguished alumnae includes astrophysicist Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, geneticist Professor Serena Nik-Zainal, journalists Mishal Husain and Vicki Young, presenter Claudia Winkleman, comedian Sue Perkins, actresses Nicola Walker and Tilda Swinton, musician Joanna MacGregor, art historian Dame Jessica Rawson and authors Helen Macdonald and Maggie O'Farrell.

Fellows, staff and students enjoy a strong sense of community and share meals together in our iconic Dome dining hall, with free lunch provided daily and drinks available in the Art Café. This is a College that believes in its people. Whether studying or working here, you become part of a community that celebrates individuality, nurtures potential and creates an environment where everyone can grow.

Our aims

1. To attract the most academically outstanding women from all backgrounds to study at Murray Edwards
2. To be a centre of educational excellence where every student is able to achieve their full potential and develop the confidence and tools to achieve their individual aspirations
3. To add value to students throughout their academic journey
4. To continue to build a stimulating intellectual and research environment for students and Fellows
5. To provide a warm, open culture that allows everyone to achieve their best
6. To continue to develop our alumnae as a mutually supportive community of women with an active and lively connection to the College
7. To have and to pursue a comprehensive fundraising strategy to support delivery of College aims
8. To secure resources to enable the College to deliver these aims.



Development at Murray Edwards

2024/25, the College's 70th Anniversary, saw an increase in New Funds Raised to £2.2m. Income Received came in at just under £2m during that year and is likely to remain at that level for the current financial year (to 30.06.26). A number of high six-figure gifts are currently in negotiation.

Recently, a number of six-figure gifts have been received towards the Library Transformation Project, plus scholarships in Mathematics and Data Intensive Science. Significant gifts have also been received for Murray Edwards' Enterprising Women programme, which has attracted wide external support beyond the alumnae community. A new legacy programme is in development, recognising a strong alumnae engagement programme and a growing income stream.

Staff resource in the Development office currently comprises 7.6 FTE, including the Director of Development and Alumnae Relations and the Director of the Women's Art Collection (at 0.6 FTE). This exciting recent collaboration enables the College to take an aligned approach across all external support, and is already significantly strengthening the opportunities to develop new income streams and increase major gifts activity.

With consultant support, an ambitious capital campaign is currently in early planning stages which will be truly transformational for the College. The campaign will bring to life an exciting estates strategy featuring new buildings for the College community and an opening up of built spaces to improve the student experience and to provide beautiful green spaces for Cambridge residents on the north side. Together with projects to increase student support, enhance academic impact and strengthen the endowment, this will be the College's first comprehensive fundraising campaign.

It is anticipated that new Director of Development will be in post at a time to influence the shape, content and financial targets of the campaign and to appoint additional fundraising staff as required.



About the role

We are seeking an experienced Director of Development, with passion and proven leadership skills, to build on the successes of our fundraising to date, to nurture a culture of philanthropy for the College and to shape our vision for development and alumnae relations at Murray Edwards. This is a key appointment for the College and a unique opportunity for an exceptional leader. Your collaborative style and experience will significantly contribute to the current and future success of the College. The postholder is eligible for Fellowship.

Main duties and responsibilities

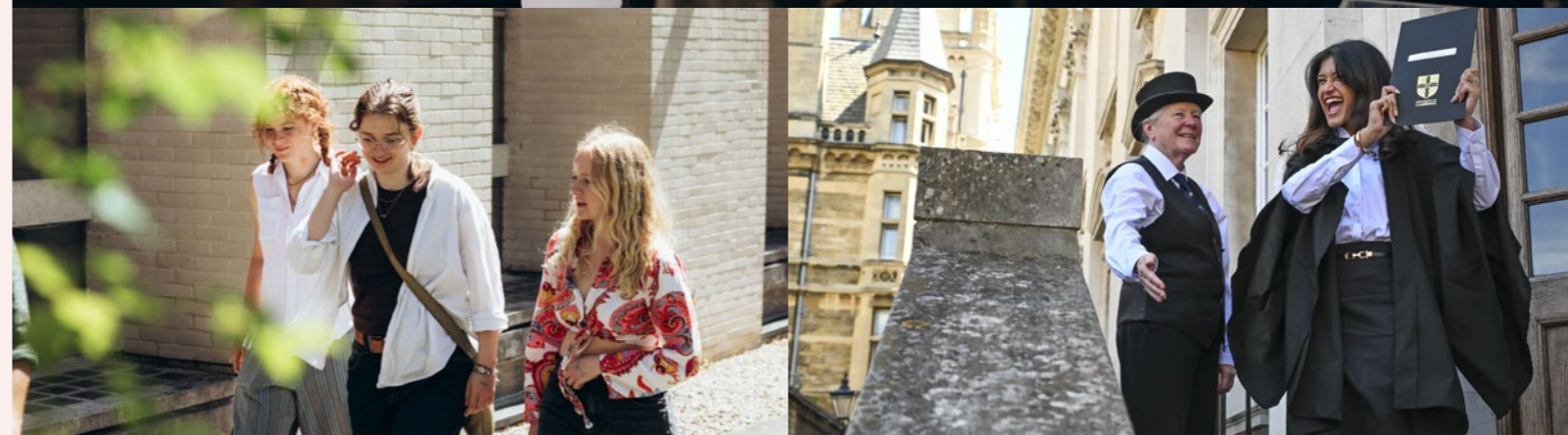
Strategic leadership and direction

- Provide strategic oversight and leadership for the further development and implementation of a comprehensive and ambitious fundraising campaign plan aligned to the College's current and future priorities
- Provide leadership for the College's Campaign and all fundraising activity, supporting Senior Officers, other colleagues and team members to undertake their fundraising roles successfully
- Work with and support your Heads of Team, and the Director of the Women's Art Collection, to develop strategies and plans in their specialist areas that maximise opportunities and align with the College's overall fundraising approach and plans
- Set clear performance objectives and KPIs across the Development and Alumnae Relations (DARO) leadership and functions
- Champion a culture of collaboration across the DARO team and across the College to build and drive an integrated approach to philanthropy and supporter engagement
- Act effectively as one of the College's senior leaders, actively contributing to College strategy development and planning

Stakeholder engagement and representation

- Act as the principal ambassador for the College's philanthropic efforts, building relationships with senior donors, alumnae and institutional partners
- Act as Convenor for the College's Development Committee, engaging Fellows and increasing their understanding of the work and impact of the Development and Alumnae Relations Office, and encouraging their participation where appropriate

- Manage a portfolio of prospects and donors, personally securing transformational and sustainable gifts
- Develop an external network of philanthropy advocates and senior volunteers to identify and cultivate philanthropic prospects
- Build trusted relationships with the President, Senior Officers and Council, and work with them where appropriate to open networks and facilitate philanthropic giving
- Support the President in the planning for and engagement of her donor prospects and potential benefactors to the College. Ensure that the President and others involved in major gift asking are fully briefed and that meetings with potential major donors are carefully planned, prepared, and choreographed
- Collaborate closely with the President, Bursar, Senior Tutor and other senior academic and professional leaders to shape the case for support and develop strategic fundraising priorities
- Represent the College at high-profile events, nationally and internationally, to cultivate key donor and alumnae relationships
- Oversee and participate fully in the College's programme of fundraising and stewardship events in the College, the wider University and externally in the UK and internationally.
- Represent the College within the University, cultivating positive relationships with key colleagues to facilitate collaboration and information sharing



Operational oversight and governance

- Oversee financial and operational management of the DARO, including business and budget planning, compliance and risk management with an emphasis on collaboration and best practice
- Ensure compliance with College policies and all relevant UK regulation regarding fundraising and gift acceptance, updating College policies and guidance and alerting the College to relevant new or updated UK regulation as appropriate
- Ensure the integrity and effective use of the College's Raiser's Edge CRM systems and data governance practices
- Embed robust reporting processes to monitor performance and evidence the impact of philanthropic and alumnae activities
- Provide professional presentations and reports to relevant committees and College leadership as required

Team leadership and development

- Lead, motivate and develop a high-performing team, building capacity and capability across all DARO functions
- Develop positive relationships with line reports and enable your line reports to carry out their roles successfully and with confidence:
 - Head of Philanthropy
 - Head of Alumnae Relations and Events
 - Head of Development Operations
 - Director of the Women's Art Collection (0.6 FTE)
 - Development Officer / PA to the Director of Development
- Foster a culture of excellence, accountability and professional development
- Encourage a can-do approach and openness to new ideas and technologies
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion principles, in line with College values and expectations



About you

You will possess the following essential skills:

- Effective relationship building, stakeholder management and influencing skills at senior level, with excellent negotiation skills to resolve complex issues
- Proven strategic planning, financial management and governance expertise
- Proficient in translating high-level ambitions into a vision for the DARO team and that will inspire engagement from College leadership and colleagues
- Warm, collegiate and people-centred leadership style with the ability to build, lead and develop high-performing teams
- Excellent written and oral communications skills and the ability to create compelling fundraising propositions
- Highly proficient with MS Office, Excel, PowerPoint

Your experience and knowledge will include:

- Senior level experience in Development/ Advancement with evidence of significant and sustained positive impact in relevant roles
- Proven track record of achieving multiple 6- and 7-figure gifts and partnerships
- Knowledge and expertise in leading and delivering high-value fundraising campaigns
- Demonstrated leadership and people management experience
- Experience of working in fundraising in a UK higher education institution
- Experience of working with volunteers, alumni or donor development boards
- Experience of the systems and processes necessary to underpin successful fundraising, including managing donor and prospect relationships on a CRM

It will be desirable to also have the following:

- Experience of leading a successful capital campaign
- Experience of working in a collegiate university
- Knowledge of global fundraising markets, particularly the USA and Asia
- Experience in using Raiser's Edge NXT
- Ability to work through complex governance structures and familiarity with committee procedure and decision-making

You will have the following personal attributes and behaviours:

- You are dynamic and proactive with drive and ambition to pursue goals and the ability to problem-solve
- You value people – you know how to communicate with colleagues to create a healthy working environment and get the best out of people. You can inspire the confidence, enthusiasm and support of colleagues, alumnae and donors
- You possess tact and sensitivity and the ability to deal with nuance and confidential information
- Ability to work calmly under pressure, to prioritise and to manage expectations and deadlines
- Commitment to due diligence and ethical fundraising
- Willingness to be a visible presence and a familiar face on campus in the College community
- Ability to work flexibly outside of office hours, including attendance at evening and weekend functions
- Ability and willingness to travel within the UK and overseas

Campaign and philanthropy development

- Lead the strategic planning and enhancement of the College's Campaign and 'business as usual' fundraising activities, focused on the College's strategic priorities
- Oversee development of a sustainable major gifts pipeline, regular giving programmes/telephone campaigns and an inspiring and robust legacy-giving strategy
- Ensure exceptional stewardship and donor experience, building strong relationships between supporters and the College and enhancing long-term engagement and loyalty
- Continually work to engage and explain the work and impact of the DARO function to colleagues, showing how their involvement makes a positive difference but respecting their time and expertise

Key relationships

- Development and Alumnae Relations team
- President, Bursar and Senior Officers
- Council and Governing Body members
- Communications, Events, Finance, HR, Tutorial, Women's Art Collection
- Key roles in CUDAR
- Donor portfolio
- New Hall Society members and key alumnae

Why join us?

This is a rare opportunity to develop and lead a transformational fundraising campaign in a unique Cambridge college that blends old and young, ancient and modern in its own, cool, style.

You will play a central role in shaping the College campus, increasing our philanthropic sustainability, strengthening global alumnae relationships, and advancing Murray Edwards' future impact and reputation.

In return, we can offer you:

- Competitive salary and eligibility for USS contributory pension scheme
- A welcoming, diverse community that values your contribution
- Opportunities to develop your career and make a meaningful impact
- Flexible and hybrid working arrangements
- 25 days of annual leave plus public holidays
- A medical cash plan
- Life assurance
- On-site parking subject to availability
- Free lunch available daily
- Gym facilities
- Cycle to work scheme.

How to apply and what to expect

The closing date for this position is midnight on Sunday 21 June 2026.

There will be two rounds of interviews: the first likely to take place on 29/30 June 2026 and the second, final interview, on 6 to 8 July.

To apply, please email hr@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk and send the following to our HR team:

- Your CV (no more than two sides)
- A supporting cover letter (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.

Once you have submitted your CV and cover letter, your application will be reviewed in detail by the hiring manager after the closing date. If your application is successful, we'll contact you to let you know what you can expect from the process and arrange your first round interview.

If you are invited for an interview, it will be at the Murray Edwards campus in Cambridge. This will be a great opportunity for us to get to know you better and for you to see your potentially new work environment and get a feel for what makes this College so special. Shortlisted candidates will go forward to a second and final interview with the Acting President and Bursar.

We will be in touch regardless of the outcome, but our successful candidate can expect an offer letter when the decision has been made.

We look forward to hearing from you.

