



Senior Advisor for Philanthropy
Needham, MA

Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering (Olin) seeks an entrepreneurial, strategic, and highly collaborative fundraising professional to serve as Senior Advisor for Philanthropy (Senior Advisor), situated within the Office of the President. The Senior Advisor will be a vital leader within the College by strategically leading major and principal gift fundraising, working closely with the Offices of Strategic Communications and External Programs and Partnerships, and holding joint responsibility for achieving the College’s annual fundraising goals. The Senior Advisor will have a unique opportunity to cultivate a culture of philanthropy and elevate the fundraising capabilities of the institution. Success for the Senior Advisor will be defined in part by the ability to harness the vision and stellar reputation of Olin College President Dr. Gilda Barabino and the new [strategic plan](#). The Senior Advisor will seek to propel the work of Olin’s students, faculty, and staff by developing a principal giving program aligning with the College’s founding vision and fueling its aspirations for the future.

Founded by a visionary \$460 million grant from the F.W. Olin Foundation in 1997, with the first class of students matriculating in 2002, Olin College of Engineering was always “intended to be different...to be a constant contributor to the advancement of engineering education in America and throughout the world, and through its graduates, to do good for humankind.” These foundational goals remain paramount as Olin evolves in its third decade of existence. Recently ranked #2 in the nation for undergraduate engineering education by *U.S. News & World Report*, Olin College envisions *engineering for everyone*, meaning both that engineering education needs to be for everyone and that engineering as a profession must serve everyone. Having just gone through this comprehensive strategic planning process, the Olin community is excited about the future growth and trajectory of the College. This provides ripe ground for the Senior Advisor to be innovative and opportunistic in identifying prospects, implementing strategies, and cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding individual gifts of \$1 million and above.

Olin is educating the next generation of engineering innovators and shifting the definition of engineering. Not only do Olin students ask, “Who are we designing this for, and what are their values?,” they also ask questions about the impact of their work on society. As Olin evolves under the leadership of President Barabino, it seeks to become a more diverse and aware community, a place where everyone is a learner and where everyone is an educator. Olin will become a place where experimentation—including making and learning from mistakes—will be embraced across the institution, not just in the classroom. Olin is a very small community, characterized by collaboration, experimentation, and interdisciplinarity across the institution. Collaboration is key to Olin’s curriculum and culture, and everyone works intentionally to reinforce the [core values](#) and culture to which the Olin community aspires. Olin is a community that thrives on being together; mutual trust is a shared value and a constant practice. The College supports teams to collaboratively decide how they can best do their work, display a commitment to the community, all while providing individuals with overall work-life flexibility.

Now is the time to further accelerate this vision. In support of these bold endeavors, the Senior Advisor will have primary responsibility for raising significant levels of philanthropic support, putting to advantage the growing national reputation of President Barabino, who is a frequent guest and speaker at events, committees, and councils of strategic national importance. The Senior Advisor will bring dynamic, fresh leadership and motivational guidance to the development process; provide day-to-day support for the President’s fundraising



activities; and collaborate across the institution in pursuit of philanthropic goals. The Senior Advisor will personally build and manage a portfolio of the College's most significant donors with direct involvement in the identification, cultivation, and solicitation of major and principal gifts (ideally seven figures and above) and will become an active and visible member of the social fabric that includes Olin's key donors, volunteers, and supporters located regionally and nationally.

The Senior Advisor will build deep relationships with Olin faculty and staff, serve as a key manager for the President's high-value relationships, and increase philanthropic support for and awareness of the groundbreaking work of Olin faculty, staff, and students. Building on the tremendous goodwill and engagement from loyal alumni, parents, and friends, the Senior Advisor will lead a systematic initiative to identify and target new donors capable of significant gifts in support of the College's strategic plan. Priorities include devising new approaches to closing equity gaps in society through science and engineering—and doing so in ways that engage those who are underserved. Real world impact includes Olin faculty and students engineering solutions to environmental injustice, educational access, sustainability, climate change, and beyond.

The successful candidate will possess at least seven to 10 years of progressively responsible development experience in a nonprofit environment. Candidates will have a proven track record of growing and implementing development strategies and programs with demonstrated results across the spectrum of philanthropic fund development, including major and/or principal gifts, capital campaigns, proposal development, special events, planned gifts, and donor relations.

A collaborative and accessible leadership style, well-suited to working within a distributed model of institutional advancement, is a prerequisite, as is the creativity, energy, and political savvy needed to prioritize and champion new ideas. Strong administrative and motivational skills are required, as well as the compassion, clarity, and communication skills necessary to articulate clear philanthropic goals and empower Olin staff, faculty, and influential supporters. In accordance with its core values and mission, Olin is especially interested in recruiting members of diverse communities and individuals with a commitment to anti-racism.

Dr. Gilda A. Barabino

[President, Olin College of Engineering](#)

[Professor of Biomedical and Chemical Engineering](#)

Gilda A. Barabino is the second president of Olin College of Engineering. A chemical engineer by training, with broad interests in global health and interdisciplinary research and education, Dr. Barabino has pioneered new engineering approaches to problems in medicine. Her seminal research in sickle cell disease has informed current technologies and formed the basis for novel therapies. She is a passionate advocate for health equity and leads national efforts to engage engineers in the development of solutions to health disparities.

Prior to becoming president of Olin College, Dr. Barabino served as Dean of the Grove School of Engineering at the City College of New York and held appointments in the Departments of Biomedical Engineering and Chemical Engineering as well as at the City University of New York School of Medicine. There she established the Master's in Translational Medicine program, which addresses unmet clinical needs through the integration of engineering, medical innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Barabino has also held academic and administrative appointments at Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory University, and Northeastern University. At Georgia Tech, she served as the inaugural vice provost for



academic diversity, and at Northeastern, she served as vice provost for undergraduate education. She is an internationally recognized thought leader and highly sought-after speaker and consultant on race/ethnicity and gender in science and engineering, with a particular focus on creating cultures and climates that support a sense of belonging. She has led a number of initiatives in these areas, including serving as the founder and executive director of the National Institute for Faculty Equity.

In recognition of her visionary leadership and outstanding professional achievement, Dr. Barabino has received many of the highest honors in academia. In 2021, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is also an elected member of the National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine. She is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering, and the Biomedical Engineering Society.

Dr. Barabino leads on a global stage. She is the current president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest interdisciplinary scientific society. In advancing science, engineering, and innovation, she and AAAS are committed to science for and by all and engineering for everyone.

As the second president in Olin's history, Barabino is leading the College into its next chapter as it continues its mission to transform engineering education around the world.

Dr. Barabino received a B.S. from Xavier University of Louisiana and a Ph.D. from Rice University. She is married to Joseph Barabino, and they have a son, Jori Barabino.

Lauren K. Taaffe

Vice President and Chief of Staff

Lauren K. Taaffe is currently Vice President and Chief of Staff at Olin College of Engineering. In this role she serves as a senior advisor to President Barabino, providing leadership and support for a variety of projects related to advancing the College's mission and aspirations. She also works closely with members of the leadership team to advance strategic priorities and presidential initiatives.

Joining Olin in 2010, she served as Associate Vice President for Development, Family and Alumni Relations until mid-2016. Within the Office of Development, Family and Alumni Relations she was responsible for the general operations of the College's program to engage alumni, parents, interested individuals, private foundations, and corporations in the College's mission and for building a culture of philanthropy. Previously, she served as Director of Development at the University of Illinois. She also served as a major gifts officer at the University of Minnesota, where she helped to complete a campaign to build a state-of-the-art studio art facility, develop the University's West Bank Arts Quarter, launch a university-wide campaign for the Minnesota Marching Band, and increase support for students and faculty.

Dr. Taaffe also served as Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations at the University of St. Thomas (Minnesota) and as the Director of Foundation, Corporate and Government Relations and Development Operations at St. Catherine University. At St. Thomas, she built relationships with corporations and foundations in support of a successful comprehensive campaign and the construction of a new science and engineering building. At St. Catherine, she increased corporate and foundation support, strengthened government relations activities, and led efforts to enhance major gifts, prospect research, gift processing, and donor



stewardship practices. She began her career in higher education as a faculty member, teaching at both the University of Chicago and SUNY at Stony Brook. She earned the M.A. and Ph.D. from Cornell University and the A.B. degree from Barnard College, Columbia University.

Philanthropy at Olin

Olin College is just 25 years old. It graduates 90 students every year and currently has an alumni base of 1,300 people, the oldest of whom are just under 40 years old. In the 2021-22 fiscal year, Olin instituted a bold new operational model for institutional advancement. Building on the institution's success in developing cross-functional approaches to advance Olin's strategic vision, three offices now share responsibility for fundraising and revenue generation: the Office of the President (major and principal gifts), the Office of Strategic Communications (annual giving, constituent relations, stewardship), and the Office of External Programs and Partnerships (philanthropic support and earned revenue from corporate, academic, and other external partners). These teams are working together to develop a culture of philanthropy and a dedication to revenue generation throughout the College that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the College and have a positive impact on past, present, and future Olin engineers.

Olin distinguishes itself by consistently achieving industry-leading participation rates among alumni, parents, and friends. In FY 2022, the participation rate was 39 percent for alumni and 41 percent for parents. A remarkable 20 percent of parents continue their giving to the College after their children have graduated. This loyalty, pride, and commitment to Olin provide ripe ground for pipeline growth to major and principal giving. In FY 2022, Olin raised \$3.5 million in philanthropic support, including more than \$1 million in unrestricted giving to the Olin Fund.

The 16-member Board of Trustees leads by example with a 100-percent giving rate, including the 2022 establishment of the Presidential Strategic Initiatives Fund of more than \$1 million in seed funding to begin the work of implementing the strategic plan.

Olin is also supported by a 20-member Parent Leadership Council that contributes vital philanthropic and volunteer resources, including dedicated calling hours for the annual phone-a-thon fundraising effort.

Given its long-term ties to industry and translational education programs, Olin enjoys robust support from corporate and foundation sponsors, including renowned national and global organizations. Private foundation grants have provided seed funding for various projects, including faculty development, scholarships, curricular design, faculty research, and other academic programming. Corporations also support the engineering capstone programs and faculty/student research projects.

Senior Advisor for Philanthropy

The Senior Advisor for Philanthropy will report to and work closely with the Vice President and Chief of Staff. As a member of the President's staff, the Senior Advisor will be a thought leader and influencer of philanthropic culture, goals, strategies, and tactics across the organization.

The Senior Advisor will have a strong fundraising track record with individual major and principal gift donors, excitement for working in a non-traditional fundraising structure for a mission-focused educational nonprofit organization, and a strong posture toward collaborative work. The Senior Advisor will focus on identification,



discovery, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship, with primary emphasis on high-level prospects who have the capacity to make transformative gifts to Olin. The ultimate goal for the Senior Advisor will be to build a strong principal gifts program, which has historically remained elusive at Olin.

Essential Duties

- Identify prospects, follow leads, secure introductions, and engage in meaningful conversations with people to develop a portfolio of high-level prospective donors.
- Work closely with the President, the Provost, and other key institutional leaders and volunteers to set and carry out short- and long-term donor-centric strategies to advance each prospective donor's meaningful connection to the College, setting the stage for solicitation.
- Model, coach, and mentor the strategic engagement and creativity required to implement the sophisticated stewardship essential to maintaining and expanding high-level donor relationships.
- Prospect research as needed.
- Timely and thorough contribution of data to the database.
- Work in a cross-institutional team within a fundraising structure that is atypical for an educational organization.

Experience and Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring many of the following professional qualities and experiences:

- A Bachelor's degree is required.
- 7 – 10+ years of experience closing gifts of six- and seven-figures and above within a mission-based nonprofit organization.
- A successful track record of working directly with the most senior levels of an organization and its transformational donors is critical, as is a sophisticated, nuanced understanding of the confluence of relationships that facilitate principal gifts discussions and propel them forward.
- Strength in developing the case and support for strategic and complex fundraising plans. Demonstrated ability to think strategically and to shape messaging in order to move individuals across the spectrum of prospect development, culminating in significant and potentially game-changing solicitations appropriate to organizational priorities and donor interests.
- Ability to engage and motivate volunteers and other constituent groups, and appreciate their role in building an effective fundraising network.
- Track record of personally closing gifts at seven figures or greater, and of staffing organizational leaders in soliciting seven- and eight-figure gifts.
- Familiarity with financial planning, tax and charitable gift laws, and planned giving vehicles and methods.
- Diplomacy, tact, and the ability to work across diverse internal and external constituents, building credibility and constructive professional relationships. Demonstrated facility in cultivating relationships and operating through influence rather than authority.
- Sound judgment, strong work ethic, and a deep commitment to excellence.
- Entrepreneurial in nature: creative, self-starting, and oriented toward action and results.
- Demonstrated oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to organize time effectively, establish priorities, and manage tasks simultaneously.



- Willingness and ability to travel.

Location, Schedule, and Compensation

Olin College offers a competitive total compensation package. Information about the benefits package is available [online](#).

This is a Needham-based position. Olin is offering a hybrid working schedule for most employees, which allows employees to work in the office or remotely. Candidates should expect to work on campus on a regular basis.

Olin College is situated on 75 acres in Needham, Massachusetts, a verdant, close-in suburb of Boston. Needham is well served by public transportation; Olin's campus is located just one mile from the MBTA Commuter Rail train station and approximately four miles from the Woodland Station for the MBTA Green Line. There is ample free parking on campus. Needham's fine schools and public services have contributed to the town's emergence as one of the more desirable suburbs of Boston. Today, Needham is primarily a residential community with easy access to Boston. A strong school system and sense of community keep the town vibrant and growing as it approaches its 300th anniversary.

Interested in Learning More?

Olin College of Engineering has partnered with Talent Citizen to assist in this recruitment. Please reach out to President Tracy D. Welsh and Senior Associate Rachel K. Partin to share your resume and cover letter via email at: ocoe-sap@talentcitizen.com.

Olin College is dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive, and authentic workplace. If you're excited about the role and have relevant experience, but your work history doesn't align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we would nevertheless welcome hearing from you.

We especially welcome applications from candidates belonging to groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA people, and people with disabilities. Olin College is an Equal Opportunity Employer.