



CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

[AVE MARIA SCHOOL OF LAW](#)

NAPLES, FLORIDA



Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Ave Maria School of Law in the search for a Chief Development Officer.

The Chief Development Officer will lead and execute a sustainable development program that broadens the base of philanthropic support for Ave Maria School of Law (Ave Law), particularly for major gifts of \$50,000 and above. The Chief Development Officer will provide direct support to the Dean, administrative leadership, faculty, and central and school-based development staff to meet fundraising goals and build affinity in support of philanthropic priorities. The Chief Development Officer will identify, qualify, cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of 100 to 120 major gift prospects while developing and executing a strategy to identify, qualify, cultivate, solicit, and steward gifts up to and exceeding \$1 million. To be successful, the Chief Development Officer will collaborate closely with fellow fundraisers, deans, department heads, faculty, and administrative staff to achieve fundraising goals and work closely with prospect research, and development and alumni relations colleagues to identify, cultivate, and track major gift prospects. The Chief Development Officer will play a critical role in developing meaningful connections with alumni, parents, and friends of Ave Law while developing strategies to move them through the donor continuum, resulting in more robust engagement and philanthropic support, including outright and planned gifts.

Ave Maria School of Law is a Catholic law school dedicated to educating lawyers with the finest professional skills. Inspired by Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Ave Law offers a distinctive legal education—an education characterized by the harmony of faith and reason. Formed by outstanding professional training and a distinctive educational philosophy, Ave Maria's graduates are equipped for leading positions in law firms, corporate legal offices, the judiciary, and national, state, and local government. Ave Law offers an outstanding legal education in fidelity to the Catholic Faith, as expressed through Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church. University legal education began in Catholic universities, and Catholic law schools have been the bearers of a tradition that safeguards the dignity of the human person and the common good. Ave Law affirms Catholic legal education's traditional emphasis on the only secure foundation for human freedom—the natural law written on the heart of every human being. Ave Maria affirms the need for society to rediscover those human and moral truths that flow from the nature of the human person and that safeguard human freedom. Ave Maria School of Law recognizes the central and indispensable role of the Ordinary of the Diocese of Venice in promoting and assisting in the preservation and strengthening of its Catholic identity.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary as an independent law school established in 2000; Ave Law is fully accredited by the American Bar Association. Ave Law is governed by an educational philosophy that emphasizes the moral foundations of the law, presents insights from the Catholic intellectual tradition, and encourages a broader perspective of the law and its role in society. The curriculum is designed to ensure that graduates will be well prepared to practice law in any jurisdiction and employment area. Ave Law boasts a student body of 270 and a network of over 1,200 alumni drawn from almost every state and several other nations. Ave Law has a successful record of national career placement—its graduates have secured 64 prestigious judicial clerkships, employment in firms of all sizes around the country, positions with federal and state agencies, and jobs with both domestic and international public-interest employers.

Ave Law's mission begins with educating lawyers with the finest professional skills. Ave Law's students are prepared for leading roles in law firms, corporate offices, the judiciary, and public service through rigorous coursework, practical training, and mentorship. Whether drafting contracts, arguing cases, or shaping public policy, its graduates possess the technical expertise to excel in any legal arena. However, technical skills alone are not enough to confront the complex legal and ethical dilemmas of today's world. That is why Ave Law emphasizes integrating Catholic moral and social teaching into every aspect of the curriculum. Ave Law challenges its students to reflect critically on the law—not just as a system of rules but as an instrument of justice rooted in universal truths about the human person.

Ave Law's commitment to serving the common good ensures that its graduates leave an indelible mark on the world. Some serve in private practice, championing the rights of individuals and businesses. Others find their calling in public service, nonprofit organizations, or academia, where their influence extends to shaping laws and policies that impact communities and nations. Regardless of their chosen path, Ave Law's alumni lead with integrity and a commitment to justice.

At Ave Law, students become part of a vibrant community united by a shared belief in the inherent dignity of every human being. Its faculty, administrators, and mentors are dedicated not only to academic excellence but also to the personal and spiritual growth of every student. Though the majority of students are Catholic, many religious backgrounds are represented within the school adding a profound sense of faith to the community.

Chosen as a distinguished guide by the esteemed Cardinal Newman Society, Ave Law is honored to be the only Catholic law school awarded this prestigious recognition. Ave Law consistently ranks as *The Princeton Review's* "Most Conservative Law School" and one of its "Best Law Schools," while also receiving recognition as *preLaw's* "Most Devout Law School." *The National Jurist* has also listed Ave Maria School of Law among the most conservative law schools in the United States. Ave Maria School of Law's passage rate for the first-time test takers who sat for the February 2025 exam was 87.5%, placing Ave Law first in the state for this exam administration.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief Development Officer will report to the Chief Executive Officer and Dean, John Czarnetzky. The Chief Development Officer will oversee a team of six staff.

FROM DEAN CZARNETZKY

There are many options when deciding where to pursue your legal education, and the competition is fierce. Prestigious names, high rankings, and lucrative alumni networks dominate the conversation. But what if you want something more? What if you're looking for a law school that equips you to excel professionally while inspiring you to live a life of purpose guided by moral truth? At Ave Maria School of Law, this harmony of ambition and integrity isn't just an ideal—it's our mission.

Ave Law offers an education unlike any other, rooted in the harmony of faith and reason as articulated by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical Fides et Ratio. Our students don't just learn the law; they are formed by a philosophy that seeks to reconcile the technical demands of the legal profession with a higher calling to serve the common good. While many law schools prioritize rankings or prestige, Ave Law prioritizes values. We focus on the natural law—the moral foundation written on the heart of every human being—and empower our students to approach the legal profession with a profound respect for human dignity and justice. Here, legal education is not merely about career success; it's about using the law as a tool for truth, freedom, and the flourishing of society.

Ave Law stands within the rich tradition of Catholic legal education, a legacy that began in universities centuries ago and has consistently safeguarded the dignity of the human person. This foundation equips our graduates to approach the legal profession with a clarity of purpose that transcends personal ambition. They understand that true freedom and justice are safeguarded by principles that flow from the natural law, and they are prepared to defend these principles in the courtroom, the boardroom, and beyond.

The mission of Ave Law is so much more ambitious than that of other law schools. In addition to training our students to be excellent attorneys, we will also show them why they should be excellent attorneys. For me, the law is much more than a job or even a profession; it is a vocation that permits me to help others achieve their own destinies.

Our noble calling as attorneys, properly understood through the wisdom of the Catholic Church as it relates to human beings, has made all the difference for me in life. We at Ave Maria Law instill that sense of vocation in our students. After all, why devote one's life to something less than a true calling to serve others?

Ave Law was founded to train lawyers who will change the world. I am confident that our graduates go out into the world as well-trained, faith-filled lawyers eager to make their mark.

— John Czarnetzky, Chief Executive Officer and Dean

LEADERSHIP

John Czarnetzky

Chief Executive Officer and Dean

Dean Czarnetzky is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (B.S., 1982, Chemistry) and the University of Virginia (J.D., 1989).

Before law school, Dean Czarnetzky was an officer in the United States Army, where he served as an intelligence analyst, specializing in foreign chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities. After law school, he practiced bankruptcy and commercial law with Sidley & Austin in Chicago, and McGuire, Woods, Battle & Boothe in Richmond, Virginia.

Dean Czarnetzky joined the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1994, teaching courses in bankruptcy, corporate reorganizations, secured transactions, civil procedure, business associations, and international trade. In 2016, he was the recipient of the Elsie M. Hood Award for the “outstanding professor at the University of Mississippi,” the highest honor awarded to faculty members at the University of Mississippi. Dean Czarnetzky also serves as a legal adviser to the Holy See’s Mission to the United Nations, representing the Holy See in negotiations, including establishing the International Criminal Court and several international treaties, including one on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Dean Czarnetzky is a lay member of the Dominican Order and a third-degree Knight of Columbus.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Development Officer will

- lead and expand the fundraising efforts of Ave Maria School of Law including identifying, cultivating, and soliciting six- and seven-figure gifts from prospective and existing individuals, corporations, and foundations, locally, nationally, and beyond;
- develop fundraising strategies which include the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of donors in support of Ave Law's mission;
- working in collaboration with the Dean, Board of Governors, faculty, staff, students, and alumni, communicate with high-net-worth individuals utilizing a high degree of responsibility, integrity, confidentiality, and compassion;
- lead and manage all fundraising operations, including establishing and implementing a multi-year strategy focused on annual, short-term, and long-term development goals in support of Ave Law's continued growth and major gift fundraising;
- manage a portfolio of major gifts prospects, developing fundraising strategies that include major gifts, bequests, annual giving, grants, and donor relations, conducting approximately 15 prospect visits per month;
- direct and supervise the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of donors;
- lead and manage multiple special events that further the Ave Law brand and promote the institution to stakeholders; cultivate existing and develop new major gift prospects at these events;
- lead and manage development staff and liaison with the Board of Governors as appropriate;
- collaborate with the Office of Communications and External Affairs to develop messaging, materials, and campaigns;
- collaborate with Ave Law's senior management, including the Dean, to structure a successful campaign strategy that will lead to major, planned, principal, and annual gifts;
- identify, cultivate, and solicit major and principal gift prospects with research ratings of \$100K+ through significant local, national, and international outreach; and
- work with Ave Law's deans, faculty, and directors to promote gifts.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Ave Maria School of Law seeks a Chief Development Officer with

- a commitment to Catholic education and the mission of Ave Maria School of Law—to offer a distinctive legal education characterized by the harmony of faith and reason;
- an ability to effectively communicate the vision, values, and mission of Ave Law while capturing the interest of prospects;

- a record of successful major gifts fundraising achievements, including identifying, qualifying, cultivating, soliciting, and closing gifts with significant institutional impact;
- experience in the successful management of prospect pools as well as campaign experience and experience in planned, annual, corporate, and foundation giving;
- a record of executing successful and profitable fundraising events that produce a positive return on investment;
- excellent writing and communications skills and an ability to produce materials that support advancement and external affairs initiatives;
- experience developing the case for support and strategic, complex fundraising plans and executing against those plans to achieve goals and objectives;
- a deep understanding of educational fundraising and moves management processes;
- experience working directly within the most senior levels of an organization and an ability to strategize and engage various groups and constituents effectively;
- experience identifying, nurturing, and motivating volunteers and an understanding of their role in building an effective fundraising network;
- an ability to utilize fundraising CRM software and extract and analyze data to make effective, efficient donor strategy and process decisions;
- managerial, leadership, and negotiation skills;
- an ability to establish trust and maintain strong relationships with board members, donors, and supporters, measured by their continued support;
- experience developing annual goals and budgets and instilling strong financial management discipline;
- the presence, cultural sensitivity, and communication skills necessary to be an effective representative of Ave Law and a liaison to the donor community;
- an ability to meet deadlines and fundraising goals;
- a high level of energy, initiative, and creativity;
- the creativity, energy, and interpersonal skills needed to introduce and champion new ideas and secure transformational philanthropy; and
- knowledge of various software applications including Microsoft Suite, Lexis Advance, iWAVEPro, etc., as well as The Raiser's Edge Development database.

A bachelor's degree and Certified Fund-Raising Executive (CFRE) accreditation is required for this position as is at least 10 years of experience in progressively responsible development and external affairs positions, preferably in an educational institution.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$180,000 to \$235,000 annually. Ave Maria is committed to offering employees a cost-effective and [competitive benefits program](#). Benefit offerings include options for medical, dental, vision, life insurance, supplemental life insurance, dependent life insurance, disability insurance, along with adoption reimbursement benefits.

LOCATION

This position is in Naples, Florida.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Ave Maria School of Law as well as the responsibilities and qualifications stated in the prospectus.***

Ave Maria School of Law recognizes the inherent value and dignity of all members of the human family. It values equal opportunity and seeks racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Ave Law does not preclude admission or retention of students or employees on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, military status, or status as a veteran or disabled veteran. Ave Law maintains its Catholic character but is open to persons of all religious faiths who respect the goals of Ave Maria School of Law and whose conduct does not undermine its religious goals or compromise its Catholic identity.

To apply for this position, visit: [Chief Development Officer, Ave Maria School of Law](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact [Tom Herbert](#).

All inquiries will be held in confidence.