



VICE PRESIDENT OF PHILANTHROPY

[VAN ANDEL INSTITUTE](#)

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Van Andel Institute in the search for a Vice President of Philanthropy.

The Vice President of Philanthropy will play a key role in the financial health and growth of Van Andel Institute (VAI). With an emphasis on relationship-based fundraising, the Vice President will develop strong connections to existing donors while seeking out and engaging new donors and supporters to maintain and expand VAI's fundraising potential. The Vice President will collaborate with leadership, research, and education stakeholders to secure corporate, foundation, and individual gifts that support the Institute's mission and priorities.

As a successful fundraiser and a multifaceted leader, the Vice President will manage an evolving team with broad responsibility for foundation relations, major gifts, planned giving, special events, and VAI's community engagement efforts, headlined by its [Purple Community](#) initiative. The Vice President will provide comprehensive and strategic leadership of philanthropic efforts and will be skilled at building effective relationships at multiple levels within a complex environment, including internally with leadership, scientists, educators, and other stakeholders, and externally with existing and prospective donors.

Van Andel Institute engages the world's brightest minds and advances the boldest ideas in pursuit of the biggest breakthroughs for humanity. Van Andel Institute is home to more than 500 scientists, educators, and staff — each one of them deeply connected to the work and driven by an urgent desire to improve health and enhance lives. Through cutting-edge biomedical research, inspired scientific education, and relentless commitment, Van Andel Institute is unleashing innovations that will improve health and enhance lives for generations to come.

Jay and Betty Van Andel founded Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1996. Their vision was to build an independent institute that would embrace novel approaches to biomedical research and science education and develop a network of collaborations with organizations stretching from West Michigan to every corner of the world. The Van Andel family believed the Institute could serve as a guiding light of hope and bring about discoveries that would lead to new and better ways to treat disease and educate the scientific leaders of tomorrow. Since its founding, VAI has supported Van Andel Institute for Research, Van Andel Institute Graduate School, and Van Andel Institute for Education in fulfilling and sustaining this vision. Today, David Van Andel leads the Institute as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, continuing the legacy that his parents created.

Van Andel Institute is home to groundbreaking research fueled by collaboration, innovation, and hope. VAI scientists delve deep into the underpinnings of health and diseases like cancer, Parkinson's, and metabolic disorders to drive new breakthroughs that change lives. Multiple world-renowned scientists contribute to a global and growing reputation in the departments of Epigenetics, Neurodegenerative Science, Metabolism and Nutritional Programming, Structural Biology, and Cell Biology.

The Institute's leading-edge research is supported by the state-of-the-art technologies and expertise of the Core Technologies and Services team, which offers a comprehensive range of advanced technologies and expertise to support and enhance research at the Institute and at collaborating organizations. Staffed by highly qualified professionals with a deep understanding of their respective fields, the Core team is committed to providing superior service and conducting exceptional science to further the Institute's goal of improving human health through basic translational research.

Education always has been at the forefront of the Institute's endeavors, with programs that elevate science and teaching across the globe. Dedicated to bringing the spirit of research into the classroom, Van Andel Institute for Education builds spaces where curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking thrive. Its educators develop inquiry-based approaches designed for K–12 education, providing teachers, administrators, and parents with the tools they need to train the next generation of scientists.

Van Andel Institute Graduate School develops scientists to be tomorrow's biomedical research leaders through an intense, problem-focused Ph.D. degree in molecular and cellular biology. By combining rigorous coursework with extensive laboratory experience under the mentorship of VAI's expert faculty, the Graduate School prepares students for productive careers in biomedical research and beyond. The Graduate School's Ph.D. program was designed to train students to conduct high-caliber, rigorous science and to translate basic biological findings into clinical applications, blending discovery with invention and insight with application.

Philanthropic support of the biomedical research and science education programs at VAI is essential to advancing the Institute's mission. While its endowment provides a strong foundation, the nature of the Institute's work in basic research — driven by innovation, risk-taking, and the pursuit of groundbreaking discoveries — requires flexible and timely resources that may exceed what the endowment alone can support. Every gift goes directly to the cause, benefiting not only groundbreaking research and K-12 and graduate science education but also enabling the Institute to explore new scientific frontiers that exceed the limits of its endowment. Each contribution brings Van Andel's scientists one step closer to understanding life-changing diseases like cancer and Parkinson's — and one step closer to saving lives.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Vice President of Philanthropy will report to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, David Van Andel, and serve as a member of the Executive Leadership Team. The Vice President will work in close partnership with the Chief Scientific Officer and Graduate School President, Dr. Peter A. Jones, and the Institute's First Lady, Carol Van Andel. The Vice President of Philanthropy directs a staff of approximately 10 people.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Just over 27 years ago, Van Andel Institute opened its doors, welcoming the challenges of biomedical research and committing to unraveling the mysteries of the diseases affecting millions across the globe. Our organization, though relatively young compared to others like it, has made exceptional advances in a comparably short amount of time. As we charge forth into our second quarter-century of service, I'm proud to say we do so with passion and humility — values I instilled in the Institute from my parents and values you'll see reflected in the work of our scientists and educators.

Exceptional research takes time, and our commitment to excellence has enabled us to earn a positive and growing reputation among our peers. I'm proud to say the Institute has become a premier destination for scientists, attracting the talent necessary to create a thriving scientific community and move us ever closer to uncovering new and better ways to diagnose and treat cancer, Parkinson's, and metabolic disorders. Today, the Institute stands among world leaders in fundamental and translational science. While others have said it could not be done, we said it could and created something unique.

Education also has been at the heart of the Institute's mission since its founding, and our programs continue to elevate science and teaching nationwide. Our mission manifests itself through training the scientific leaders of tomorrow in the Van Andel Institute Graduate School and our K-12 Education programs; inquiry-based learning is at the core of what we do. Both continue to thrive as they instill the curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking necessary to develop the next generation of scientists.

Here in Grand Rapids, we have more than 500 scientists, educators, and staff who work daily to continue moving forward on our voyage of discovery. Countless other global collaborators contribute to our success. None of these achievements would be possible without passionate VAI supporters. We rely on a network of organizations, individuals, businesses, volunteers, sponsors, and philanthropists to fund the work that powers our progress. Their generosity fuels discovery and propels breakthroughs that will be felt for generations.

I believe my parents would be pleased if they could see what their vision sparked. Our family has always believed the people of Grand Rapids and West Michigan would support endeavors like ours — ones that improve our community and our world, today and tomorrow.

Our new Vice President of Philanthropy will inherit a set of challenges and opportunities as we strive to achieve our ever-heightening aspirations. Our strong endowment has positioned us well to sustain our legacy in perpetuity. Our determination to continuously tap creative and innovative ideas continues to drive us forward. As we expand our reach, this is an incredible opportunity for a strong strategic leader who can demonstrate a deep and sustainable background in cultivating donors across various sectors and marketplaces to expand our reach beyond our West Michigan roots. You will be joining us at a pivotal moment and shaping the Institute's purposeful growth and mission. I look forward to exploring this opportunity with you, learning about your experiences, and recruiting a dynamic partner for our leadership team.

— David Van Andel, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

FROM THE CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER AND GRADUATE SCHOOL PRESIDENT

As Van Andel Institute's Chief Scientific Officer, I have the privilege of leading a passionate team of brilliant scientists who make a difference through discovery. We have nearly 40 labs with research spanning multiple fields, including epigenetics, neurodegenerative science, metabolism, cell biology, and structural biology. The Institute is home to experts who are among the top in their fields. In the scientific world, I can confidently say, "We're on the map."

Every day, we work to answer critical questions about health and disease with the goal of finding new and better ways to treat cancer, Parkinson's, and a host of other disorders. We thrive on an approach I like to call "catalytic collaboration." An institute with and without walls, we cross-pollinate ideas among our own faculty and pursue discovery in partnership with the brightest minds around the world. Our collaborative spirit is at the heart of our success.

I first visited Van Andel Institute as a speaker in 2013 and, soon after, they reached out to me with an opportunity to become Chief Scientific Officer. Prior to that first visit, I hadn't heard of VAI and I didn't know where Grand Rapids was. From the moment I stepped through the doors, however, I knew I was someplace special. As a scientist, the Institute has everything of which you could possibly dream — a deep commitment to excellence, unmatched operational support, and stunning, state-of-the-art facilities. Today, I'm proud to say that our impact and reputation has grown by leaps and bounds. We are known globally as a place that conducts rigorous, impactful, paradigm-shifting research.

It was clear from day one that everyone at the Institute is aligned toward one goal: improving human health through life-changing science. Over the past 10+ years, we have built a world-class research enterprise, one like no other. This success is due in part to our commitment to collaboration, which brings together the best of the best from VAI and other organizations to answer big questions, drive innovation, and speed the transition from the lab into clinical trials.

The Vice President of Philanthropy is an integral bridge between scientists and potential donors whose generosity can accelerate progress in our areas of focus. By helping people connect with our research, you will expand a vibrant network of support that enables us to move discovery forward.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity and the potential to contribute to the transformative work being done at Van Andel Institute.

— Dr. Peter A. Jones, Chief Scientific Officer and Graduate School President

VAN ANDEL INSTITUTE'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Van Andel Institute believes that its strength lies in the diversity of its people and the inclusive environment it fosters. The Institute is committed to creating a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential. Van Andel Institute recognizes that diversity encompasses a wide range of visible and invisible differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, and life experiences. It believes embracing these differences leads to innovation, better decision-making, and a more vibrant workplace culture.

Van Andel Institute is dedicated to treating all employees equitably, ensuring that opportunities for growth, development, and advancement are accessible to everyone. It recognizes the importance of supporting its employees professionally and personally. Its policies and practices intentionally promote a healthy work-life balance for all. The Institute strives to create an accommodating workplace that meets the diverse needs of its workforce, understanding and addressing individual requirements to ensure everyone performs at their best. Van Andel Institute has implemented various initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. These programs are continuously evaluated and enhanced to serve its evolving workforce better.

Van Andel Institute acknowledges that creating a truly inclusive environment is an ongoing journey. It is committed to listening, learning, and adapting its practices to better support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization. By embracing differences and fostering an inclusive culture, Van Andel Institute is creating an environment where innovation thrives, employees feel valued and supported, and the organization can positively impact scientific research and education.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vice President of Philanthropy will

- provide inspiring, empathetic, approachable, and inclusive leadership with an infectious optimism and adept ability to lead through periods of change;
- in conjunction with the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team, develop the Institute's philanthropic and donor engagement strategy, synergistically integrating major elements such as foundation grants, major gifts, planned giving, special events, and community engagement activities to enhance the Institute's brand, increase community sponsorships and grow overall philanthropic support;
- develop deep and collaborative relationships with leadership, research, and education stakeholders to identify programmatic priorities and opportunities, and create actionable strategies to meet those needs and enable significant, sustainable growth in philanthropic support, consistent with the Institute's philanthropic and donor engagement strategy;
- attract, cultivate, and retain diverse teams with a broad set of ideas and skills to achieve organizational impact by recognizing and leveraging individual strengths, expertise, and teamwork;
- lead and manage the Philanthropic team to successfully achieve goals and objectives while maintaining the ability to provide hands-on support and a "roll up the sleeves" mentality when necessary;
- provide guidance on best practices for systems, technology, and processes;
- partner with Communications and Marketing and colleagues across the Institute to develop compelling messages for donors that raise the Institute's visibility and reputation within the philanthropic community, metro Grand Rapids community, broader Michigan, and beyond; and
- collaborate and liaise with the First Lady of Van Andel Institute in supporting philanthropic efforts related to signature events, fundraising, and cultivating relationships with existing and potential donors.

LEADERSHIP

David Van Andel

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

David Van Andel is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Van Andel Institute. He is also an entrepreneur involved in several other business interests in the natural and life science products industries. He currently serves as a member of Amway's Board of Directors on its Executive, Governance, and Audit committees. He is also active in numerous business, cultural and community organizations including The Right Place Economic Development Agency and The Economic Club of Grand Rapids. Additionally, Van Andel played a prominent role in bringing professional hockey back to Grand Rapids in 1996. He is co-owner and chairman of the two-time Calder Cup champion Grand Rapids Griffins. Van Andel was born and raised in Grand Rapids, and he graduated from Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

Dr. Peter A. Jones

Chief Scientific Officer and Graduate School President

Dr. Peter A. Jones was born in Cape Town, raised and attended college in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and received his Ph.D. from the University of London. He joined the University of Southern California in 1977 and served as Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center between 1993 and 2011. He is currently the Chief Scientific Officer of Van Andel Institute.

His laboratory discovered the effects of 5-azacytidine on cytosine methylation and he first established the link between DNA methylation, gene expression and differentiation. He pioneered the field of epigenetics, particularly its role in cancer, and helped develop novel therapies for cancer. Dr. Jones is a past president of the American Association for Cancer Research, a Fellow of the AACR Academy, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published more than 300 scientific papers and received several honors, including the Outstanding Investigator Grant from the National Cancer Institute. He and his colleague Dr. Stephen Baylin shared the Kirk A. Landon Award for Basic Cancer Research from the AACR in 2009 and the Medal of Honor from the American Cancer Society in 2011.

Carol Van Andel

First Lady

A native of West Michigan, Carol Van Andel has dedicated most of her adult life to service on behalf of others through volunteer roles with more than a dozen nonprofit organizations. Passionate about her community in ways that advance education, children's issues, the arts, and health and human services, she is a staunch supporter of the initiatives of her husband, David Van Andel, as well, which include helping coordinate Van Andel Institute's fundraising efforts for research and education to battle cancer and other debilitating diseases. In 2013, she led the creation of the Carol Van Andel Angel of Excellence Award, commending supporters who show a strong commitment to VAI's mission through service and philanthropy. In her role as First Lady, Carol honors the essential role the founding family plays in the organization and in the broader community. As a volunteer, Carol is deeply involved as an official advocate for the Institute's research endeavors, educational initiatives, and community outreach programs. A prominent ambassador for the Institute, Carol Van Andel raises awareness, fosters collaborations, and garners support throughout multiple sectors, including the scientific and education community, policymakers, donors, and the public. As a role model who serves as a force for good in the community, Carol brings people together to inspire their involvement and provide hope for a healthier future. Through service and a spirit of generosity, she elevates the Institute and highlights the Van Andel Family's ongoing legacy of commitment to the West Michigan community.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Van Andel Institute seeks a Vice President of Philanthropy with

- a commitment to the mission of Van Andel Institute — to improve the health and enhance the lives of current and future generations through biomedical research and science education;
- experience cultivating and stewarding new and existing donors including soliciting contributions with significant institutional impact;
- capital campaign and foundation relations experience;
- a history of strong leadership and effective management; agility in toggling between strategy, hands-on execution, and team leadership; and an ability to lead and motivate staff and stakeholders at all levels;
- an exceptional work ethic and an ability to succeed in a fast-paced, evolving environment;
- superb verbal and written communication skills with the gravitas, demeanor, and comfort level needed to serve as a highly visible and public-facing ambassador for VAI;
- basic science and independent research institute familiarity (preferred);
- excellent judgement, an ability to provide wise counsel, and strong analytical skills;
- an ability to handle and prioritize multiple, varied, and complex matters involving disparate internal and external stakeholders; and
- a commitment to the highest ethical professional standards and a strong sense of integrity.

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least 10 years of fundraising experience including at least seven years of major gift and foundation relations experience is preferred for this position. Van Andel Institute will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the Institute, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

SALARY, BENEFITS, AND CULTURE

The salary range for this position is \$250,000 to \$300,000 annually with an executive bonus plan. Van Andel Institute offers a comprehensive benefits package to include the choice of two medical/prescription health care plans, dental plan, vision coverage, two types of pre-tax savings accounts, a comprehensive 401(k) and 457 plan, life insurance, long-term care insurance, disability leaves, paid parental leave, professional development, and many more. VAI provides 12 paid holidays, paid time off, and a generous vacation package.

Van Andel Institute is home to hundreds of dedicated scientists, educators, and support staff who are focused on one, unifying mission: to improve the health and enhance the lives of current and future generations. It is an organization made strong through its shared values. These values are the heart of its culture and the essence of who it is when it is at its best. With employees from more than 30 countries, there are opportunities to meet people from various cultural, educational, and employment backgrounds.

LOCATION

This position is in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Van Andel Institute as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: [Vice President of Philanthropy, Van Andel Institute.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Clare McCully, [claremccully@aspenleadershipgroup.com.](mailto:claremccully@aspenleadershipgroup.com)

All inquiries will be held in confidence.