Perrett Laver | 25 YEARS



Appointment of

# Executive Director, Cunningham Shoquist Center for Applied AI and Human Potential

November 2026

Santa Clara
Cunningham
Shoquist Center
for Applied AI and
Human Potential




Perrett Laver

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# About the Cunningham Shoquist Center for Applied AI and Human Potential

Accelerating its role as a leader in the application of artificial intelligence to address real-world challenges, Santa Clara University (SCU) recently established the Cunningham Shoquist Center for Applied AI and Human Potential.

The University's fourth Center of Distinction, this new Center was funded by a generous gift from Santa Clara alumna, trustee, and Executive Vice President of Operations for NVIDIA, Debora Shoquist. In naming the Center, Shoquist included the last name of her sister, G. Lee Cunningham, to acknowledge and honor the supportive role Cunningham has played in her life.

The Cunningham Shoquist (CS) Center for Applied AI and Human Potential is an interdisciplinary hub in the heart of Silicon Valley where faculty, staff, students, alumni, industry partners, and the broader community collaborate to responsibly design and deploy AI that amplifies human creativity, accelerates problem-solving, and unlocks insights from data at scale. This work advances innovation that serves society by developing technologies that promote human welfare, connection, and dignity in ways that are shaped by Santa Clara University's Jesuit values.

The interdisciplinary Center will build on existing SCU strengths by advancing applied AI research and education in domains such as:

- Healthcare and medical imaging
- Information access including search engines and recommender systems
- Infrastructure
- Intelligent robotics
- Computational creativity and human-computer interaction

Importantly, the Center will also address fairness, safety, transparency, privacy, and security to benefit a wide range of real-world applications.



The mission of the new Center is to advance responsible and applied AI research and education to enhance human capability and drive innovation for the common good. Housed in the School of Engineering, the Center will build on the university's existing AI-related research and collaborations among Santa Clara's varying disciplines (business, law, education, counseling psychology, arts, sciences, and Jesuit theology), in addition to existing centers of distinction in social entrepreneurship, applied ethics, and Jesuit educational traditions. Currently, more than 100 faculty across the University are engaged in AI-related research and scholarship across this wide range of disciplines.

The Center will also be a focal point for AI-related academic-industry engagement in Silicon Valley and will further support both thought leadership and an evolution in the research and education portfolio as the field changes over time. Students will be trained to ethically design and deploy AI systems that work to solve real problems while adapting to a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

The CS Center will have an Executive Director, a Faculty Director, a staff person, and three named faculty positions. Other faculty across campus will be affiliated with the Center and its work by contributing, leading, or supporting Center-affiliated research, education, partnership, or outreach activities. Access to Center resources and programming will bolster the competitiveness for affiliate faculty seeking to secure external funding or partnerships associated with their specific research, teaching, or mentoring efforts. Renovation of a 1500sf physical space is currently underway to create a collaborative and welcoming space for the CS Center by January 2027. Santa Clara is also expanding computing infrastructure to serve the needs of the CS Center, faculty and students.











# About the School of Engineering at Santa Clara University

Housed in Santa Clara University's School of Engineering, the Cunningham Shoquist Center for Applied AI and Human Potential is part of a community grounded in Jesuit education and committed to solving society's most complex challenges. The School prepares students to lead with competence, conscience, and compassion, to build a more just, humane, and sustainable world.

Across 11 academic departments and programs, students can pursue eight undergraduate degree programs, 11 minors, 11 M.S. programs, four Ph.D. programs, and a range of graduate certificates. The School of Engineering combines rigorous theoretical foundations with hands-on learning. At the Sobrato Campus for Discovery and Innovation, classrooms, labs, research areas, and shared spaces bring students and faculty together to learn, collaborate, and create.

The School of Engineering is committed to combining expert instruction and personal attention with a pedagogy grounded in ethical perspectives. This commitment underpins all aspects of its work. In pursuit of its mission, the School:

- Provides educational excellence that interlaces theoretical knowledge, practical application, and societal and environmental impact;
- Explores, cultivates, and applies knowledge and scholarship in distinctive frontiers of engineering;
- Collaborates with their partners within the vibrant and diverse Silicon Valley community and throughout the world; and,
- Embraces their values and Jesuit mission in developing a diverse and inclusive culture of integrity, mutual respect, and aspiration for excellence.

SCU is committed to "engineering with a mission"—a mission to serve their students, their region, and their world. The mix of rigorous academics, project-based learning, and values-based education nurtures students into leaders who are well-equipped to face the engineering and ethical challenges of the future.

# Job Description

The Executive Director (ED) has a unique opportunity to build a new AI Center from the ground up at an innovative university with an established foundation of AI research, education, and outreach in the heart of Silicon Valley. Santa Clara University's grounding in Jesuit values offers a distinctive emphasis on human flourishing, ethics, and service to society. The ED will hire, direct, and motivate Center staff, and create a culture of innovation and collaboration with associated staff and faculty. Reporting to the Dean of the School of Engineering, the founding ED will build the center's operating model and infrastructure and manage the Center's annual budget.

The Executive Director will collaborate with Santa Clara University (SCU) leadership and faculty to develop and execute a vision and strategy for the CS Center. The ED is an external-facing role that will include thought leadership, fundraising, and deepening and broadening connections with industry, philanthropy, and other potential partners in Silicon Valley. This role will position the Center to be both a convener and a strong contributor to the growing discourse around the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies that serve society by amplifying human creativity, accelerating problem-solving, and unlocking insights from data at scale. The ED must be able to adaptively lead and position the Center for impact within the rapidly evolving context of AI advancement and adoption.

The ED will collaborate with the Faculty Director among others to identify and pursue opportunities to grow campus and community engagement, for example, by increasing the number and scope of graduate-level AI industry practicums, connecting Center resources and programming to affiliated faculty across campus, strengthening opportunities for student engagement, or supporting hands-on experimentation and AI literacy training for both the SCU community and the public. The ED will collaborate with other units on campus where shared resources are needed, e.g. for marketing and communications, and fundraising.



# Key Responsibilities

### Strategic Leadership and Center Development

- Collaborate with the Dean of the School of Engineering, the Center's Faculty Director, the Cunningham Shoquist Professor of Computer Science and Engineering and other University leaders to develop, refine, and execute a compelling vision and strategy for the Center.
- Establish the Center's operating model, organizational infrastructure, priorities and ways of working, ensuring that it is well positioned to respond to developments in AI and deliver meaningful impact.
- Translate the Center's mission and strategic ambitions into practical initiatives, partnerships, and programs, identifying opportunities to build on Santa Clara University's existing strengths and develop new areas of activity.
- Adaptively lead in a rapidly evolving technological and institutional environment, balancing long-term ambition with the flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities.

### External Engagement, Partnerships, and Resource Mobilization

- Serve as the Center's principal external ambassador, developing and sustaining relationships with senior leaders across technology and AI companies, philanthropy, government, nonprofit organizations, research institutes, and other relevant sectors.
- Build a strong network of strategic partners in Silicon Valley and beyond, identifying opportunities for collaboration that advance the Center's mission and extend its reach.
- Develop and implement a fundraising and resource-mobilization strategy, cultivating philanthropic relationships, securing financial support, and identifying opportunities for sponsored research, corporate partnerships, and other sources of revenue.
- Create and sustain partnerships that connect academic expertise with real-world challenges, enabling collaborative research, practical experimentation, and the application of AI for societal benefit.

### Thought Leadership, Convening, and Profile

- Raise the Center's profile and influence within the AI ecosystem, establishing its reputation as a distinctive contributor to conversations about AI, human potential, and societal impact.
- Convene diverse audiences from academia, industry, philanthropy, policy, and civil society to explore emerging opportunities and challenges in AI.
- Communicate complex technological, social, and ethical issues in accessible and compelling ways, articulating the relevance of the Center's work and its grounding in Santa Clara University's Jesuit mission.
- Work with University colleagues to develop effective communications and thought-leadership activities that demonstrate the Center's work, partnerships, and impact.
- Position the Center as a trusted partner for organizations seeking to explore and advance the responsible development and deployment of AI.
- Represent the Center at external events, conferences and other forums, communicating its vision and developing relationships with influential leaders and organizations.

# Key Responsibilities

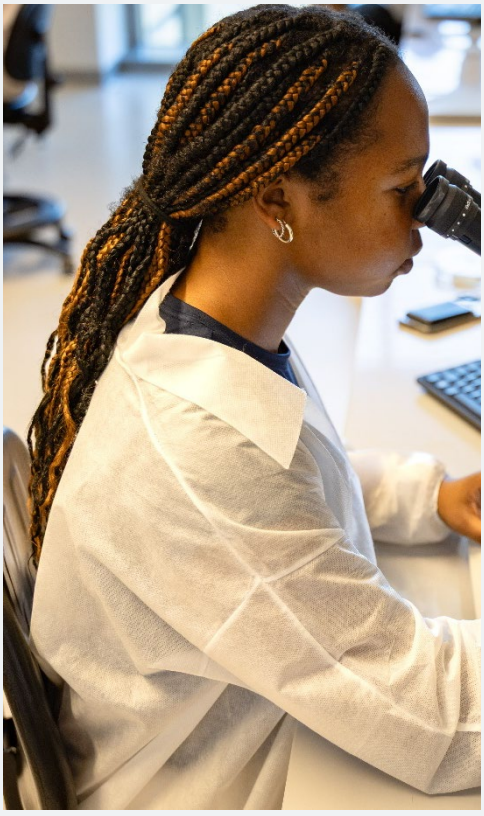
### Academic Collaboration, Education and Community Engagement

- Partner closely with the Faculty Director to connect the Center's external relationships and resources with faculty expertise, academic priorities, and curricular innovation across the University.
- Identify opportunities to expand the number and scope of graduate-level AI industry practicums, connecting students with practical challenges and industry partners.
- Strengthen opportunities for student engagement through internships, fellowships, applied projects, and other experiential learning activities.
- Support interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty working on AI across engineering, business, law, education, psychology, the arts and sciences, and other relevant disciplines.
- Help develop programming that supports hands-on experimentation and AI literacy for the SCU community and the wider public.



### Organizational and Financial Management

- Recruit, lead, develop, and motivate Center staff, establishing clear priorities and fostering a high-performing, collaborative team.
- Manage the Center's annual budget and resources, ensuring effective planning, financial oversight, and alignment between expenditure and strategic priorities.
- Develop the operational processes and infrastructure required to support the Center's activities as it grows.
- Collaborate with other University units, including marketing and communications and fundraising, to make effective use of shared resources and coordinate the Center's activities with broader institutional priorities.



# Candidate Qualifications

The successful candidate will be an entrepreneurial and collaborative leader with the vision, judgment, and relationship-building skills to establish and grow the Cunningham Shoquist Center for Applied AI and Human Potential. They will bring a strong understanding of AI and its implications for society, a genuine commitment to Santa Clara University's Jesuit mission, and the ability to build bridges between technology, academia, industry, and the wider community. They will be an engaging communicator and strategic thinker, capable of translating an ambitious vision into meaningful partnerships, programs and impact.

The ideal candidate will bring many of the following qualifications, experiences and attributes:

### Strategic and Entrepreneurial Leadership

- A minimum of 15 years of progressively responsible experience in relevant sectors, which may include industry, higher education, government, or nonprofit organizations.
- Experience serving on a leadership team, contributing to organizational strategy, and successfully leading a significant initiative, organization, or program.
- A track record of building something new, developing emerging initiatives, or creating momentum around an ambitious vision.
- The ability to exercise sound judgment, navigate ambiguity, make decisions with incomplete information, and translate strategic priorities into tangible results.

### AI Fluency and Intellectual Breadth

- Broad familiarity with AI, its applications and its implications for society, with the credibility to engage meaningfully with technical experts without necessarily being a technologist.
- An understanding of the wider social, economic, educational, and ethical implications of AI.
- Intellectual curiosity and an interest in connecting AI with disciplines beyond engineering and computer science, including business, healthcare, education, psychology, ethics, law, and global development.
- The ability to support a broad range of academic and interdisciplinary interests while helping identify opportunities for collaboration and impact.

### Alignment with Santa Clara University's Mission

- A genuine and demonstrable commitment to Santa Clara University's Jesuit mission and values, including the potential for AI to contribute to human flourishing and the common good.
- The ability to articulate a compelling vision for AI and human potential, and to communicate why Santa Clara University is uniquely positioned to advance this work.
- A thoughtful perspective on the societal significance of applied AI and its potential to benefit people and communities.

# Candidate Qualifications

**Relationship-Building and Partnership Development**

- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to establish trust and credibility across diverse constituencies, including faculty, University leadership, technology executives, entrepreneurs, philanthropic leaders, and community partners.
- Experience developing strategic partnerships and translating relationships into substantive collaborations, practical opportunities, and lasting impact.
- Experience securing funding, cultivating donors, developing business partnerships, and/or mobilizing resources to advance an organization or initiative.
- The ability to work collaboratively across institutional boundaries and bring together stakeholders with different perspectives, interests, and expertise.

**Communication and Thought Leadership**

- Superb written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to explain complex technological and societal issues in accessible, engaging, and compelling ways.
- The confidence and credibility to represent the Center publicly, engage with media, build its profile, and establish its reputation as a leader in applied AI and human potential.
- The ability to convene diverse audiences, facilitate productive dialogue, and inspire others around a shared vision.
- High emotional intelligence, sound judgment, and a collaborative approach to working with internal and external stakeholders.

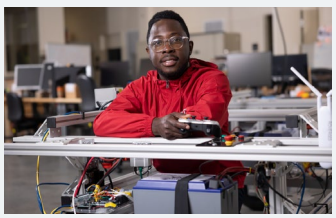
**Understanding of Higher Education**

- Experience in higher education, or meaningful experience working with universities, is advantageous, although a traditional academic career path is not essential.
- An understanding of faculty culture, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the practical realities of working across academic departments and institutional structures.
- The ability to build effective relationships with faculty and University leadership while engaging confidently with external partners from industry, philanthropy, policy, and other sectors.
- A master's degree.











# About Santa Clara University

Founded in 1851, Santa Clara University (SCU) is California's oldest institution of higher learning, with a 174-year tradition of educating the whole person for a life of service and leadership. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and just minutes from San José—one of the nation's fastest-growing and most diverse cities—the campus spans 106 acres of award-winning gardens and state-of-the-art facilities surrounding the Mission Santa Clara church. Ranked among the top 15 percent of national universities by U.S. News & World Report, Santa Clara has among the best graduation rates in the nation and is rated by PayScale in the top 1 percent of universities with the highest-paid graduates. The University has produced elite levels of Fulbright Scholars as well as four Rhodes Scholars. It is known increasingly as a growing center for technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, top tier teaching, and accomplished faculty across a wide range of disciplines, including business, law and engineering, with its graduates playing leading roles in a myriad of industries in Silicon Valley and beyond.

Santa Clara's strategic plan, Impact 2030, builds on the University's ascent as one of the nation's leading institutions of higher learning and centers around four strategic priorities for expanding institutional impact: reach on a global scale, solutions for the universal good, opportunity for all talented students, and belonging for all Broncos.

**Mission:** The University pursues its vision by creating an academic community that educates the whole person within the Jesuit, Catholic tradition, making student learning our central focus, continuously improving our curriculum and co-curriculum, strengthening our scholarship and creative work, and serving the communities of which we are a part in Silicon Valley and around the world.

**Vision:** Santa Clara University will educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion and cultivate knowledge and faith to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world.

Learn more about Santa Clara's mission, vision, and values on their website.



## Community and Programs

Santa Clara University has a total student population of approximately 9,500 students, including 6,508 undergraduates and 2,954 graduates, hailing from 48 states and 43 countries globally. The University is organized into seven academic units: the College of Arts and Sciences, the Leavey School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Education and Counseling Psychology, the School of Law, the Jesuit School of Theology, and the recently announced Mark & Mary Stevens School of Medicine, a collaboration between Sutter Health and Santa Clara University. At the heart of the University are its 1,150 dedicated staff members, and 756 full-time and 308 part-time faculty members, who are as committed to their students' intellectual and moral development as they are to pursuing research and scholarship. Santa Clara emphasizes small classes (11:1 student to faculty ratio) and a values-oriented curriculum, combining experiential learning and a nationally recognized teacher-scholar model. With a commitment to learning beyond the classroom, Santa Clara provides vibrant residential communities, hands-on community learning, dynamic student life programs, and competitive Division I and recreational athletics.

## Campus and Location

Santa Clara University has built a community that distinctly blends entrepreneurialism and innovation with a commitment to faith-inspired values of ethics and social justice. It is located in the heart of Silicon Valley which is known globally as a place where ideas are born. Many of the most significant scientific and technological advances in computing, as well as a broad range of fields from medicine to law, have come from this region. The Silicon Valley location contributes significantly to making the University a growing center for technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Santa Clara's campus spans 106 lush acres with world-renowned gardens and beautiful, state-of-the-art facilities surrounding the iconic Mission Church. The campus is adjacent to San José, the 10th largest city in the United States, and is a short drive to the beaches of Santa Cruz and to San Francisco, situating the University in one of the most culturally and environmentally diverse regions in the world.

Integral to Santa Clara University's mission is a deep and ongoing engagement with the surrounding communities in Silicon Valley and well beyond. SCU's community programs, activities, and initiatives are distinct in that they help strengthen the connection between the University, its neighbors, and the world, while creating opportunities for all Santa Clara University students to learn, serve, and grow. This engagement works in both directions. Santa Clara University welcomes neighbors to experience their campus culture through public events and enrichment programs. Activities throughout the year include exhibits, performances, athletics, and public forums featuring some of Silicon Valley's most notable visionaries—often their own alumni.

The University recognizes its obligation to transform how students see the world and their places in it. Grounded in ethics and social justice, a Santa Clara University education empowers students to help find solutions to global problems and to effect change in their communities.



# How to Apply

To apply, please submit a CV and cover letter, detailing how you fulfil the role description and personal specification to Perrett Laver's Vacancies page quoting reference **8735**. The deadline for applications is **9:00am PT on Sunday, December 6, 2026**.

The role will be based in Santa Clara, California.

The expected salary is $325,000-$350,000 USD. Learn more about Santa Clara University's benefits offerings on their website.

The selection committee will together review all candidates' applications and agree on a longlist for the role. Longlisted candidates will be invited to discuss the position with Perrett Laver in greater detail. The selection committee will subsequently meet to decide upon a final shortlist to be invited to the formal interview stage.

### EEO Statement

Santa Clara University is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, ancestry, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, parental status, veteran or military status, physical or mental disability, medical conditions, pregnancy or related conditions, reproductive health decision-making, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws. For a complete copy of Santa Clara University's equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policies, please visit the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX website.



## Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Santa Clara University does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities on the basis of sex/gender and prohibits retaliation against any person opposing discrimination or participating in any discrimination investigation or complaint process internally or externally. Information about Title IX can be found on SCU's website. Inquiries can also be made to the Assistant Secretary of Education within the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

## Clery Notice of Availability

Santa Clara University annually collects information about campus crimes and other reportable incidents in accordance with the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act. To view the Santa Clara University report, please go to the Campus Safety Services website. To request a paper copy, please call Campus Safety at (408) 554-4441. The report includes the type of crime, venue, and number of occurrences.

## Americans with Disabilities Act

Consistent with its obligations under the law, Santa Clara University will provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities. Applicants who wish to request a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application or hiring process should contact the Department of Human Resources ADA Team at hraccommodations@scu.edu, or by phone at (408) 554-5750.

## Data Privacy Statement

Protecting your personal data is of the utmost importance to Perrett Laver and we take this responsibility very seriously. Any information obtained by our trading divisions is held and processed in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The data you provide us with is securely stored on our computerized database and transferred to our clients for the purposes of presenting you as a candidate and/or considering your suitability for a role you have registered interest in.

Perrett Laver is a Data Controller and a Data Processor, and our legal basis for processing your personal data is 'Legitimate Interests'. You have the right to object to us processing your data in this way. For more information about this, your rights, and our approach to Data Protection and Privacy, please see Perrett Laver's Privacy Policy.



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