

Job Description

Job Title:	Media Relations Manager
Department:	University Communications
Reports To:	Director, Media Relations & Issues Management
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 11
Effective Date:	December 2020

Primary Purpose

The position is responsible for creating, executing and maintaining media relations initiatives in support of an ambitious global media relations program with the goal of publicizing Waterloo's academic and research excellence and positioning the institution as among the world's best universities.

Often at the leading edge of managing the institutions external reputation, the position provides media relations leadership for university communications staff in faculties and departments in the writing, and execution of media collateral, as well as editing and revising those submitted by communications staff in faculties and departments. The position is also responsible for handling media enquiries and supporting the broader outreach agenda using communications tools and best practices.

Given the significant volume of activity in this portfolio, the incumbent is actively involved in issues management activities and crisis communications, to ensure a positive reputation and the best possible outcome for the university.

Key Accountabilities

Planning and budgeting: This position will contribute to the development of the media relations strategy within an overall University Relations, Communications strategic plan and the associated multi-year action plan and budget for the media relations program. The individual will be responsible for maintaining the measures of effectiveness for media relations initiatives and for regular program evaluation and to align with the achievement of departmental and institutional goals.

Program development and execution: The incumbent will oversee the execution and evaluation of a program of global media activities, which will include:

- develop and manage program delivery to support the media relations strategy to meet established targets
 - a. Execute media outreach, initiate coverage, attend media events, develop collateral/press materials
 - b. Strategically and systematically evaluates research discoveries and outcomes, university events and new developments, identifying those with the greatest potential for being picked up by the media ensuring an emphasis on institutional priorities, specifically increasing the university's research and building on international profiles
 - c. Gather information, conduct research, interview sources, and write a variety of high-impact materials for the media on a wide variety of subjects (e.g., news releases, social media releases and multi-media content in support of news releases); Strategize and tailor messages appropriately
 - d. Understands and operates in a broad spectrum of political, social and cultural milieus in which the university operates.
- edit and revise news releases and advisories submitted by communications colleagues across the university; write news releases on behalf of campus colleagues and the university, drafting quotes on behalf of university spokespeople, the President, Provost and Deans, as well as other senior administration in media materials in keeping with and relying on a knowledge of the university's main messages; develop and maintain distribution lists for news releases;

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- strategically expands the university's network of media contacts by researching and identifying high profile, broad reach media targets; foster, manage and steward relationships;
- provide a superior experience for media contacts to ensure Waterloo is the preferred first point of contact for media by ensuring reliable and timely response, immediate direction to identified campus experts and appropriate follow-up
- increase both quality and quantity of earned media in selected and targeted media against specified goals;
- contribute to the maintenance of the university's news pages and the homepage news feed on the university's website and working collaboratively with the digital initiatives team ensure best-in-class approaches and new technologies are identified and introduced
- maintain an up-to-date and best-in-class experts guide and other materials to support and engage media
- provide excellent customer service to senior administration as well as academic and staff colleagues across campus, including but not limited to the timely creation and distribution of the daily NewsWatch
- draft correspondence and media messages to meet outreach needs at the request of senior administration and senior staff members and in consultation with the government relations team;
- provide leadership in the organization and coordination of media interviews with members of the university community, including but not limited to senior administration and faculty, and provide expert strategic advice and individual counsel on media interviews
- represent the university to the media at high profile events and activities on campus including government funding announcements, major donor announcements, building openings and international conferences (e.g. WGSJ; Waterloo Innovation Summit); these events require the incumbent to diplomatically and effectively manage the media interaction with the university's most senior donors, stakeholders, funders, or volunteers such as Board members
- acts in place of the Associate Director during their absences

Quality control:

- The incumbent will be responsible for ensuring excellent quality and consistency in all media materials. A focus on the use of plain language and multi-media to bring academic research to life for the media and general public is expected.
- The incumbent will use research and insights to develop and enhance media relations initiatives and will understand and apply media relations best practices.

Image and issues/crisis management:

- This position will be accountable, in conjunction with the Director, Media Relations & Issues Management, for enhancing the profile, image and reputation of the university in the media and general public in support of the university's strategic plan.
- The incumbent participates in and advises on the planning of issues management strategy on confidential matters in order to minimize and manage risk to the university. This includes the assessment of risk and the astute evaluation of the expected media approach to inform the development of strategy and messaging
- The incumbent is a key member of the Emergency Response Communications team and plays a critical role during a crisis to ensure the Director, working in the field with media, is fully aware of official directions/information coming from the university's Emergency Response Group

Collaboration and outreach: The incumbent will:

- provide leadership, coaching and advice to marketing and communications officers campus wide to identify opportunities for media engagement in alignment with stated goals, the communications calendar and the university's priorities
- maintain strong relationships with university faculty, researchers and senior administration
- act as a seasoned advisor providing expert opinion to effectively counsel academic colleagues on the optimal approach to public messaging to ensure media interest and coverage
- provide advice and support to campus experts by providing training and tips on responding to media queries
- perform media outreach by initiating, developing and maintaining superior working relationships with media reporters, editors and producers

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- assists in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of a thorough media coaching program for faculty, staff and senior administration.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in English, journalism, communications, public relations or communications-related field.
<p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 7 to 10 years of media relations experience with a proven track record in a complex, fast-paced environment.
<p>Knowledge/Skills/Abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent written and verbal communication skills; excellent editing skills • Superior critical thinking and excellent analytical skills to enable immediate and appropriate assessment of complex issues of concern to stakeholders including among others, the media, the public, the campus community and funders. • Strong organizational skills and ability to handle multiple tasks and meet deadlines. • A service mind-set and a team approach to working with colleagues and media partners. • Advanced Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. • Video production and photography experience a plus • Actively engaged in social media.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, communicates with all employees in all groups and departments and at all levels. Must be able to effectively manage change and succeed in high-risk, high-pressure situations with significant public and campus scrutiny and potential for impact on the university's reputation. The incumbent will be required to work closely and collaboratively within University Relations and campus-wide marketing and communications colleagues to ensure consistency in institutional messaging and management of university image and reputation through paid and earned media, public relations initiatives and issues/crisis management. The incumbent will need be able to influence and persuade faculty colleagues to embrace best practices for media relations initiatives.
- **Level of Responsibility:** The incumbent requires a deep understanding of the issues facing the post-secondary education sector and the ability to interpret these factors into insight to inform the media relations strategy. The position is responsible for specific results of the media relations program against specified goals. The position will be involved in and advise in emergency, crisis and issues management situations. The position demonstrates a broad and thorough understanding of the news media and its needs and will have a sensitivity to the political, cultural and social contexts in which the university operates and those affecting the campus community. The position is expected to bring innovative approaches and new concepts and models to media relations programs.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** The incumbent is required to exercise superior judgement relying on expert knowledge and ability to make critical decisions quickly while being responsible for the delivery of media relations initiatives that best support the university's priorities and enhance its reputation. The individual must be analytical and insightful, able to quickly assess and interpret complex issues, planned and emerging, and able to develop media relations approaches and public messaging to enhance the institution's reputation.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment.

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- **Working Environment:** Moderate exposure to disagreeable conditions typical of a position exposed to stress and pressure associated with management-level responsibilities with significant public and campus scrutiny and potential for impact on the university's reputation. Media inquiries and issues affecting the university occur at any time. As a result, work outside the stated operating hours of uWaterloo normal in this role.