

Job Description

Job Title:	Director, Strategic Initiatives and Communications
Department:	Faculty of Health, Dean's Office
Reports To:	Executive Officer
Jobs Reporting:	Manager, Web and Digital Communications; Social Media Specialist
Salary Grade:	USG 14
Effective Date:	January 2023

Primary Purpose:

The Director, Strategic Initiatives and Communications, will be responsible for managing communications and strategic initiatives for the Faculty of Health. Working directly with the Executive Officer and the Dean, this position will be responsible for developing, executing and sustaining strategic initiatives and special projects in the Faculty of Health. The Director will also be responsible for enhancing the public profile of Health, providing leadership, direction, and expertise in the development of integrated and long-term communications strategies that align and further the Faculty's strategic objectives, plans and vision. By conducting background research, developing reports, and through the creation and management of effective communication programs, the incumbent will strategically position the Faculty as a leader in academic and research excellence. Through collaboration within the Faculty and across campus, the incumbent will lead the development and operationalization of strategic plans, including the development, execution and evaluation of print, digital, social media and media relation strategies that will lead to a continued worldwide impact and recognition of the Faculty and the University of Waterloo. The incumbent will be responsible for the faculty's extensive communications portfolio and ensuring the delivery of marketing and branding projects that support for advancement-related activities imperative to achieving the Faculty's strategic goals. This position will be responsible for the supervision of the Faculty's Manager, Web and Digital Communications and Social Media Specialist.

Key Accountabilities

Strategic Initiatives & Data Analyses:

- Identify, research and implement, in collaboration with other members of the Faculty of Health leadership team, strategic initiatives for:
 - Advancing key priorities for the Faculty of Health
 - Elevating the profile of the Faculty of Health as a leader in academic and research excellence
 - In partnership with the Leadership team, develop, refine, implement and communicate the Faculty's strategic plan, ensuring alignment with the University of Waterloo's Strategic Plan
- Through maintaining a strong knowledge of the Faculty's academic and research activities, identify opportunities, trends and anticipate issues that will support the strategic vision and mission of the Faculty.
- Lead the development of the strategic plan/framework and work-plan for the Faculty, and support the detailed current year operating plan, while adhering to direction set by the Dean and Executive Officer. This includes formalizing and leading the strategic planning process for the Faculty, with a focus on long-term trends and outlook, and developing competitive intelligence.
 - Working in collaboration with the Dean and Director of Advancement, engage external experts to learn and influence strategies, constantly remaining alert and forward thinking about opportunities and risks.
 - Organize planning retreats, including setting an agenda and overseeing follow-up on

agreed action items.

- Lead the Faculty's' approach to measurement and evaluation of the work-plan initiatives with a focus on the creation of a performance dashboard for impact and organizational effectiveness
- Facilitate development of an annual work-plan for the Faculty's' strategic plan.
- Research high-priority projects and prepare backgrounders that cogently identify both opportunities and inherent risks
- Leverage external relationships to support achievement of the Faculty's' priorities and objectives.
- Work collaboratively with Faculty and institutional communications, advancement, and government relations to support and improve the Faculty's planning and decision-making.
- Oversee the development and implementation of strategies to identify Institutional and Faculty data and analysis in the pursuit of advancing the mission of the Faculty.
- Build trust in the use of relevant credible data and analyses to inform decision-making and evaluation of strategies.
- Lead the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and dashboards to monitor, measure and assess the effectiveness of all strategic communication activities and plans.

Media and Public Relations

- Develops and manages program delivery to support the media relations strategy to meet established targets
- Remains up-to-date and knowledgeable about all academic and research activities within the Faculty in order to make educated statements about these activities, and to optimize stakeholder participation in communications initiatives
- Strategically and systematically evaluates research findings by faculty members, , campus events and new developments, identifying those with the greatest potential for being picked up by the media, and ensuring emphasis on Faculty and greater institutional priorities
- Directs the production of a variety of high-impact materials for the media, including but not limited to press releases and media advisories
- Collaborates with Media Relations and Marketing and Strategic Communications to ensure excellent quality/consistency and initiate coverage and outreach
- Seeks new and innovative opportunities for earned media coverage of Health initiatives by expanding the network of media contacts, researching niche targets, and working in collaboration with other departments on campus to leverage the audience for increased awareness about the Faculty of Health.
- Acts as a seasoned advisor and coach to colleagues, providing expert opinion on best practices and how to optimize public messaging to ensure media interest and coverage
- Responds to media requests for Health representation by quickly identifying appropriate experts and supporting the arrangement of interviews
- Positions faculty members and researchers as thought leaders in their fields by supporting the writing of op-ed pieces
- Represents the Faculty at events and activities both on and off-campus to act as a diplomatic and knowledgeable facilitator between the media and the Faculty's leadership team and funders.

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Marketing and Branding

Act as a primary Faculty content provider for the University's online, print and digital channels (institutional communications materials; website homepage and highest level pages), identifying and writing engaging and informative stories from academic research, student activities and teaching initiatives, ensuring alignment with the broader communications calendar

- Directs the production of marketing collateral that supports strategic initiatives. Work with designers, photographers and external vendors to create visually appealing products within budget
- Maintains an exceptional understanding of brand guidelines and promotes a unified look and feel for the Faculty through the creation and maintenance of a suite of promotional material
- Encourages adherence to brand guidelines among faculty, staff and students by fielding questions, and providing direction and expert counsel on best practices

Communications Planning

- Develops and manages an effective external communications strategy to enhance awareness of the Faculty and its accomplishments
- In consultation with the Dean and other Faculty leaders, develops an integrated communication plan in support of the University's goals, and position the Faculty as a destination of choice for future students, current student and other stakeholders (e.g. alumni, donors)
- Directs the implementation of the communication plan using a deep knowledge base to ensure effective messaging, resourcing and timing
- Leads the development and implementation of an effective internal communications program to foster increased information-sharing among the Faculty's three academic departments and associated research centres
- Acts as an editorial resource by assisting with researching, writing, editing and designing strategic publications and communications including annual reports, backgrounders, and brochures.
- Participates in and advises on the planning of issues management strategy on confidential matters relating to Health in order to minimize and manage risk to the Faculty. This includes the assessment of risk and the astute evaluation of the expected media approach to inform the development of strategy and messaging
- Conducts regular review of metrics and overall program evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Faculty's communication portfolio and media coverage
- Plans the distribution of communication initiatives to appropriate stakeholders
- Works closely with senior administration to craft timely and appropriate messages to employees
- Develops messaging for Faculty leadership at speaking engagements, in keeping with and relying on a knowledge of advancement goals and priorities.
- Supports colleagues at events with communications needs or marketing collateral

Planning and Budgeting

- Develops a communications strategy within the overall Faculty strategic plan
- Develops an associated budget and implementation plan
- Maintains and reports on metrics related to communications initiatives for regular program evaluation and achievement of Faculty and institutional goals
- Overall managerial responsibilities for the Communications team including hiring, staff performance, salary administration, promotions, reclassifications, etc.

**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

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Education

- University degree in marketing, communications, online journalism, public relations, writing-centric and/or corporate communications required. Additional training or professional development related to strategic planning, performance measurement and communications preferred.

Experience

- At least ten years in roles of progressive responsibility for planning, relationship building and strategic initiatives, preferably in an academic setting.
- Skilled writer and editor, experienced in leading institutional or corporate communications.
- Experience fielding media inquiries and working with journalists to drive deadlines
- Experience articulating positioning/messaging in alignment with the priorities of a strategic plan
- Experience creating and managing social media campaigns, developing innovative and persuasive content and tracking metrics to assess traffic patterns and demographic details
- A proven track record of providing strategic advice to advance the goals and objectives of an organization, taking account of priorities, mandates, and stakeholder needs and aspirations.
- Demonstrated track record of leading, supervising and developing high performing teams and of balancing conflicting and pressing demands.
- Knowledge of federal and provincial programs and policies affecting the post-secondary sector.
- Evidence of being a persuasive and respected leader with highly developed communication and interpersonal skills, who is comfortable with networking, influencing and persuading at the highest level.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Thorough knowledge and understanding of marketing communications, strategic communications planning, print media and digital media
- Exceptionally skilled writer and editor, able to assess content quickly, creatively, accurately and for a variety of mediums while maintaining the highest quality
- Broad and deep knowledge and experience of the workings of a large research university, in particular the relationship between the institution and academic units, the workings of academic support units, and relationship across academic Faculties.
- Advanced understanding of institutional data, and analyses, including how to leverage and make use of data and analyses to inform and advance the Faculty of Health mission.
- Ability to understand and operate in a broad spectrum of political, social and cultural milieus, and be able to distill complex academic information into plain language to bring research to life.
- 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 project management skills with the ability to meet fluctuating and time sensitive deadlines
- Ability to work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to coordinate and organize efforts in support of strategic priorities
- Flexible, diplomatic, efficient and capable of managing crisis situations as they arise

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, communicates with all employees in all groups and departments and at all levels. Works closely and collaboratively with Marketing and Strategic Communications and campus-wide marketing and communications colleagues. Externally, this position will have significant contacts with suppliers and community and sector partners and will be involved in conferences and meet-ups to advance the strategic communications agenda of the Faculty and, at times, the University of Waterloo
- **Level of Responsibility:**
 - The job has specialized work with minimal supervision.
 - Content and materials produced by the incumbent are distributed widely, and the incumbent is solely responsible for their accuracy.
 - The position is expected to be forward looking, aware of trends and bring innovative and creative recommendations to the Faculty communications and advancement team.

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- The incumbent sits on the University Emergency Communications Team and will be responsible for leading communication efforts during crisis situations.
 - **Decision-Making Authority:** The incumbent is required to exercise superior judgment relying on expert knowledge and the ability to make critical decisions quickly. Makes decisions on timelines and budget allocation to meet stated objectives. The individual must be able to quickly assess and interpret complex public relations issues and make recommendations to senior leadership to minimize risk and enhance the institution's reputation.
 - **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment.
 - **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 Faculty occur at any time. As a result, work outside the stated operating hours of UW should be anticipated in this role.