

Job Description



Job Title:	Executive Director, Research Strategic Initiatives
Department:	Office of Vice-President, Research and International
Reports To:	Vice-President, Research and International (VPRI)
Jobs Reporting:	Senior Manager, Research Strategic Initiatives, Executive Assistant to VPRI, Administrative Assistant to Senior Leadership (STL)
Salary Grade:	USG 15
Effective Date:	September 2020

Primary Purpose

Reporting to the Vice President Research and International (VPRI), the Executive Director, Research Strategic Initiatives undertakes key activities and projects that support the most effective and impactful delivery of the VPRI's strategic goals. The position supports the VPRI across all of their responsibilities and takes a lead role in identifying strategic linkages and providing advocacy between institutional portfolios and outside agencies both industry and government. Institutional issues management is a key function of the this role demanding a high level of responsibility and responsiveness to ensure that the Office of the VPRI is effective in carrying out the VPRI's mandate in a way which commands the respect of the University's diverse constituencies and the external communities. The role also provides strategic oversight for all communications from the Office of the VPRI.

Key Accountabilities

Strategic Initiatives and Administrative Leadership

- Supports the process of all senior leadership hires, including development of their respective mandate letters and facilitation of performance reviews
- Develops and manages a workplan for the VPRI Office, including SLT (Senior Leadership Team) members
- Lead the development of the strategic plan/framework for the key offices within the VPRI portfolio (i.e. Office of research and Waterloo International) including long term strategic planning focusing on long - term trends and outlook, and developing competitive intelligence
- Identify, research and implement, in conjunction with other members of the Office of VPRI senior leadership team, strategic initiatives for advancing the key priorities of the Office of the VPRI
- Conduct background research, develops reports, and provides advice on strategic priorities and objectives of the VPRI and, more generally, of the Office of Research.
- Gather intelligence and maintain environmental scans for major initiatives and developments, both on campus and externally, that are relevant to the VPRI's mandate.
- Research high priority projects and prepare backgrounders that cogently identify both opportunities and inherent risks
- Project manages priority strategic initiatives within the VPRI's workplan ensuring timely progress is made, key milestones are reached and deliverables are met
- Lead the development of multi-year work-plans and detailed current year operating plan, including measurement and evaluation of the work-plan initiatives with a focus on the creation of an organizational dashboard for impact and organizational effectiveness.
- Engage external business and industry experts to learn and influence business strategies, constantly remaining alert and forward thinking about opportunities and risks in the industry.

- Maintain a strong knowledge base of current UW programs, policies, resources and services; develop strong relationships with senior leadership to effectively liaise, anticipate issues and opportunities, and identify trends.

Advocacy Support of VPRI Portfolio Areas

- A key leader of the university's broad advocacy and engagement strategy as it relates to the Research and International portfolios.
- Acts as a resource for the various research offices and researchers who are seeking advice and assistance on engaging with government on advocacy and promotion of priority files (e.g. guest lists, funding opportunities, partnership opportunities) within the VPRI portfolio
- Works directly with the VPRI, OR-SLT and AVP-WI to co-ordinate and support UW external advocacy initiatives in collaboration with UR's Government Relations office. The incumbent will be expected to regularly travel with senior administration, as well as on their own, to lobby and represent the university with the ministers, political staff, and senior public officials in the federal and provincial governments.
- Conducts background research on important issues and anticipates the need for information
- Gathers intelligence and conducts environmental scanning of major initiatives and developments related to the VPRI portfolio both on campus and externally to keep the VPRI up-to-date on emerging issues.
- Identifies and cultivates relationships with key individuals in organizations and with other strategic partners who have objectives and interests that align with UW in existing and new areas of work.
- Fosters, develops and effectively liaises with key stakeholders including industry, alumni, donors, government and community partners in order to advance the University's strategic research and international relationships.
- Attends meetings with, or on behalf of the VPRI or VPRI-SLT (Senior Leadership Team) as appropriate, to ensure that suitable follow-up occurs and the UW senior administrators are briefed on outcomes.
- Supports VPRI and the VPRI-SLT in their meetings with government officials.
- Develop positive relationships with University Relations and its primary stakeholders, both internal and external, and identify opportunities for internal collaboration and consultation
- Identifies and supports opportunities to advance the University's image and reputation with targeted audiences through multiple channels and engagement opportunities; including public and industry events; speaking opportunities, consultations and budget advocacy.

Relationship Management

- Develops and fosters effective liaison with key stakeholders to enhance strategic initiatives of the VPRI.
- Supports the work of the VPRI's SLT, ADRs and Dean by identifying linkages and emerging issues and opportunities between faculty research portfolios and by making recommendations that enhance systems/processes/programs that support the priorities of the VPRI.
- Ensures effective communications and decision-making between and within the VPRI's Office and other executive offices and constituencies (Board of Governors, Deans, Provost, PVP, ADRs)
- Leverages external relationships to support achievement of the VPRI's priorities and objectives.
- Supports the VPRI Senior Leadership Team on initiatives
- Works on behalf of the VPRI to develop or follow up on governance matters for the Board
- Oversees both the timetable and preparation of key documents required for Board of Governors, PVP and Senate meetings
- Accountable for the development of the VPRI's quarterly governance reporting on achievements, priorities, initiatives and actions

Job Description



- Works closely with the AVP Communications and AVP Government Relations to identify opportunities for the VPRI to improve UW's sense of community, and building UW's research reputation provincially, nationally and internationally
- Maintain a close working relationship with the VP, University Relations, AVP Government Relations, Senior Director Community Relations, AVP Communications, Media Relations in order to advise the VPRI on emerging issues related to internal and external initiatives and issues management relating to the research and international portfolios
- Liaises with the AVP, Waterloo International to facilitate connections for the VPRI in order to build international presence through establishment of corporate partnerships, collaborative academic programs and joint research initiatives in priority markets

Issues Management

- On behalf of the VPRI triages issues of reputational significance to the University and works with the various SLTs or their designates to proactively and reactively manage issues of a broad nature.
- Evaluates emerging and longer term opportunities and threats to achievement of the VPRI's priorities and critical success factors of the University
- Identifies a portfolio which will have carriage of the issue; tracks the progress of the issue at critical points, disseminates and coordinates information regarding the issue, ensuring that progress is made and updates provided to the VPRI
- Monitors campus activities and briefs the VPRI as needed, with attention to implications from the standpoint of both internal and external stakeholders
- Communicates on the VPRI's behalf with various members of the executive team, Deans, VPRI-SLTs, ADRs as required
- Responds to and meets with broad range of internal and external individuals and groups, frequently related to matters of immediate concern, and coordinates responses, solutions, and follow-up with the VPRI and other appropriate university officers.
- Assists the AVP Interdisciplinary Research by facilitating executive recruitment efforts related to Centres and Institutes.

Office of the VPRI Administration

- Develops advocacy documents to advance the institution's strategic priorities for discussions with Ministers and Deputy Ministers
- Oversees high-level communications or briefing materials for dissemination to target audiences in collaboration with other units in the University, as appropriate, to advance the profile and reputation of the University's research and international portfolios
- Works with the VPRI to support communications and media interviews related to high profile issues and events, including risk management associated with such communications
- Provides leadership, writing and advice on responses to inquiries from government officials
- Works with Marketing and Strategic Initiatives on university collateral impacting research and international portfolios
- Oversees key written communications to ensure they accurately reflect the VPRI's position
- Reviews key communications with respect to issues to be published over the VPRI's signature
- Works collaboratively with Office of Research Communications, Media Relations, & Government Relations to convey VPRI messaging
- Conveys, as appropriate, information on the VPRI's involvement in high profile activities, including speaking engagements, nationally and internationally
- Manages staff that works with the SLT

**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*

Job Description



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

Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undergraduate degree required, Master's degree or PhD preferred
Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum five (5) years of professional experience providing strategic, administrative and management in the office of a C-level executive or a large post-secondary institution.• At least three years' experience of managing staff and leading diverse teams• 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• Proven track record in advocacy and government relations
Knowledge/Skills/Abilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must be able to quickly assimilate information, analyze data and be able to provide strategic advice, guidance and decisions• Extensive knowledge of the University's policies, procedures and operating requirements, and the academic culture on campus is an asset.• Must be confident, organized, and an accomplished problem solver.• Tact, judgment and diplomacy are essential.• Advanced mediation, communication and relationship management skills including an ability to influence, negotiate and build productive working relationships with key stakeholders, senior university management and external partners to achieve required outcomes.• Outstanding written skills in the preparation of papers and reports.• Highly developed people management and leadership skills with the demonstrated ability to develop and support a professional, service and continuous improvement focused workplace culture.• Ability to think and act strategically, creatively and dynamically in a high-pressure work environment.• Ability to form relationships at senior levels of the Board and University (Deans and Vice-Presidents) to serve the mission of the University.• Ability to make difficult and complex decisions with good judgment and with acute sensitivity to the political environment and to the reputation of the Office and the University.• Ability to manage confidential and sensitive materials and situations with the utmost discretion• Excellent computer skills specifically MS Word and PowerPoint• Strong organizational, prioritization and analytical skills; proven ability as a problem-solver• An ability to work independently and as a member of a team• Strong interpersonal skills; strong verbal and written communication skills; tact, good judgement, diplomacy and an ability to maintain confidentiality are essential• Knowledge of federal and provincial Research & Development funding agency programs and policies would be an asset.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Broadly based, often at a very senior level, both within and external to the University
- **Level of Responsibility:** Reports directly to the VPRI and has a significant level of responsibility and accountability to support the priorities of the VPRI and the vision of the university's research and international portfolios. High-level oversight and organizational responsibility for discussions and events; integral involvement in strategizing on issues of the utmost importance to the Institution. More generally, contributing in a professional and timely manner to the management of a multitude of issues

in a fast-paced, multifaceted environment Often manages highly confidential issues for the VPRI. Highly complex issues are managed which may involve all levels of government, media, corporate leaders, opinion leaders, faculty, staff and students – often high risk of impact on institutional reputation if not managed well. Manage initiatives on behalf of the VPRI and advises the President and other senior leaders on matters related to programs, issues, policy and both internal and external relations. Required to act on behalf of the VPRI and serve as a liaison with campus leaders, government leaders and community members

- **Decision-Making Authority:** Must be capable of making decisions independently, and knowing when to escalate matters to the VPRI or one of the VPRI Senior Leadership Team, and of contributing positively and creatively to discussions around strategic decisions to be made by the Vice-President, VPRI. Decisions with respect to allocation of VPRI's time (fund-raising, government relations, senior committee meetings, social events, etc.) as well as determining what issues require the VPRI's time and what issues can be resolved by others; Makes decisions regarding the external and internal messaging and communications being delivered from the VPRI office.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal, typical for an administrative position in an office environment
- **Working Environment:** Occasional travel; regular working hours with some evening/weekend work; minimal exposure to disagreeable physical conditions in the workplace