

## Job Description

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<b>Job Title:</b>	Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management (SMMRI)
<b>Department:</b>	University Communications
<b>Reports To:</b>	Director, Media Relations and Issues Management
<b>Jobs Reporting:</b>	None
<b>Salary Grade:</b>	USG 12
<b>Effective Date:</b>	September 2020

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### **Primary Purpose**

The Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management (SMMRI) has two major roles. Firstly, the SMMRI plays a pivotal role in managing, protecting and elevating the University's reputation, particularly as it relates to issues that carry significant reputational risk, by being a strategic partner to various stakeholders on communications strategies with the media, employees, students and other external publics. Secondly, the SMMRI must help to enhance the public profile of the University of Waterloo by strategically positioning the institution as a leader in academic and research excellence through proactive news and media strategies. 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. The SMMRI will frequently act as the University's spokesperson and must contribute to efforts to maintain strong relationships with journalists locally, nationally and internationally.

### **Key Accountabilities**

Working within the broader University Communications team, the Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management contributes to the development, execution and evaluation of a strategic program of media activities and management of issues and crises, which includes:

- Advises senior leaders on communications related to crises and controversial issues using outstanding judgment to assess the information leaders need to receive and the best way to present information to advance the University's reputation and strategic priorities, often under intense time pressure.
- Proactively engages in the first stages of a developing issue or crisis, offering early insights and intelligence support senior leaders
- Makes recommendations – including drafting responses - to senior leaders across the University on the best approach for issues-related communications and in many cases dealing with media responses.
- Develops communications strategies that mitigate any significant risks that controversies pose to the University's reputation. These strategies will often emphasise media responses but will most frequently include other channels addressing a range of audiences internal and external to the University.
- Develops strategies and tactics to address issues proactively, including creating content that highlights ways in which the University is addressing difficult issues.
- Coordinates issues and emergency communication across the University and gains buy-in from the appropriate stakeholders on the best course forward.

- Identifies key issues the University faces or may face, and develops issues briefs for each, including background information, key messages, recommended strategies, spokespeople, etc.
- Regularly scan news, websites and social media (the latter in partnership with the central social media team) to identify potentially significant issues and monitor issues as they develop.
- Advises social media colleagues on strategies and messaging to respond, where appropriate, to negative comments/posts/tweets related to issues – and when to proactively communicate about issues on social media channels.
- Evaluates media coverage on key issues and generates reports as needed using media monitoring tools.
- Manages projects as they relate to the University's communications on a variety of politically sensitive and high-profile issues.
- Responsible for drafting and maintaining a comprehensive set of key messaging on University priorities and emerging issues.
- Manages all aspects of day-to-day media relations activities including providing excellence and responsive service to the media with a full understanding of deadline pressures.
- Strategically and systematically evaluate research discoveries and outcomes, university events and new developments, to identify those with the greatest potential for media coverage, with an emphasis on institutional priorities.
- Gather information, conduct research, interviewing sources, and writing a variety of high-impact materials for the media on a wide variety of subjects (e.g., news releases, social media and multi-media content).
- 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.
- Act as spokesperson on behalf of the University as needed, in consultation with the Associate Vice-President, Communications.
- Contribute to a program of coaching and mentoring to enhance the capacity of faculty, researchers and staff in engaging with the media.
- 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.
- Manage vendors and contracts and assessing services for the potential value to Waterloo's programs.
- Coordinate media relations activities with a broad range of internal communicators and stakeholders.

### **Emergency Communication Plan**

- Working in support of the Associate Vice-President, Communications, is responsible for Waterloo's emergency communications planning in order to minimize and manage risk to the University in times of crisis.
- Responsible for updating the Emergency Communication Plan based on evaluation of best practices and lessons learned.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for leading lessons learned processes following the activation of the Emergency Communication Team.</li> <li>• Responsible for leading the development and implementation of training to support the Emergency Communication team.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Planning and Budgeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Responsible for maintaining the measures of effectiveness for media relations and issues management initiatives and for regular program evaluation and to align with the achievement of departmental and institutional goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for ensuring consistency, accuracy and excellence in quality and content of messaging in all media materials.</li> <li>• Focus on the use of brand standards, plain language and multi-media to bring academic research to life for the media and general public is expected.</li> <li>• Use research and insights to develop and enhance communication initiatives and will understand and apply communication best practices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaboration and Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Maintain strong relationships with university faculty, researchers and senior administration.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Provide advice and support to campus experts by providing training and tips on responding to media queries.</li> <li>• Perform media outreach by initiating, developing and maintaining superior working relationships with media reporters, editors and producers</li> <li>• Assist in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of a thorough media coaching program for faculty, staff and senior administration.</li> <li>• Build and maintain relationships with both domestic and international/business media including reporters and bloggers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Insights and Understanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate economic, social, political, environmental and technological developments to keep activity relevant and targeted.</li> <li>• Bring together views and perspectives of stakeholders to gain a wider picture of the landscape surrounding activities and policies.</li> <li>• Define and develop a strong understanding of different audiences. Use this knowledge to ensure the tone, language and format of communication is easily accessible to and read by a range of campus groups.</li> <li>• Draw on organizational insights to advise leaders on targeted communication strategies and actions to improve engagement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measurement and Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and use a range of data sources to advise leaders on the overall impact of emergency and crisis communication, key message effectiveness and other communication approaches, in conjunction with other communication leaders.</li> </ul>

*\*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**

#### **Education**

Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience in English, journalism, communications, public relations or communications-related field.

#### **Experience**

- At least 7-10 years of experience in media relations or communications and in successfully managing complex and highly charged issues on behalf of a publicly visible organization.
- Recent experience in counseling C-Level leaders, political leaders, or boards on issues management and experience working with legal counsel in managing issues.
- Strong record of building close relations with media and of working in an organization with a high-profile reputation, often in the media spotlight.
- Experience of working with senior executives and leaders and demonstrating advanced influencing and negotiation skills.
- Demonstrable track record of leading, line managing and developing teams of professional staff and of balancing conflicting and pressing demands.
- Experience of developing organizational objectives into material for targeted communications and engagement activities across a range of different channels and media, including face-to-face engagement.
- Experience of working with people with no direct or negative experience of 'professional' communications and ensuring their expectations/input/requirements from communication are effectively aligned and managed.
- Evidence of a highly collaborative style and an ability to react quickly to changing circumstances.

#### **Knowledge/Skills/Abilities**

- Strong managerial and organizational skills and ability to handle multiple tasks and meet deadlines.
- Exceptional communications judgement, a service mind-set and a collegial approach to working with colleagues and media partners.
- 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.
- Flexibility to adapt to unexpected and time sensitive demands.
- Highly developed people management and leadership skills with 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 manage confidential and sensitive materials and situations with the utmost discretion.
- Must be confident, organized and an accomplished problem solver.
- Ability to make decisions with good judgment and with acute sensitivity to the political environment and to the reputation of the University.

### **Nature and Scope**

#### **• Contacts:**

Internally, communicates regularly and professionally advises and consults with all senior leaders including the President, and with all employees in all groups and departments to inform, influence, educate and collaborate and to promote and build the University's profile. Externally, this position

must maintain strong relationships with journalists locally, nationally and internationally and with stakeholders at all levels in partner organizations.

- **Level of Responsibility:**

This position will be the primary point of contact for developing communication approaches to all levels of reputational risk and emergency. The position will be in a leadership role in emergency, crisis and issues management situations. 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 communication strategy. 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.

- **Decision-Making Authority:**

Responsible and accountable for establishing the priorities for issues management, emergency communication, media relations and addressing the changes to strategic business plans in consultation with the Director, Media Relations and Issues Management and Associate Vice-President, Communications. This position will routinely be involved in problem solving issues that affect the reputation of the University in conjunction with leaders in University Relations and across senior administration. They are responsible for making recommendations of strategy

- **Physical and Sensory Demands:**

Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment. This position requires outstanding customer service, sound judgment, a strong work ethic, calm demeanor, ability to work under very challenging time constraints, constant interruptions and competing priorities.

- **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 the University is normal in this role.