

Job Description

Job Title:	Communications and Outreach Officer
Department:	Systems Design Engineering
Reports To:	Department Chair
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 8
Effective Date:	January 2021

Primary Purpose

The Communication and Outreach Officer (Officer) works to enhance the administration, recognition and reputation of the Systems Design Engineering department (SYDE) and its undergraduate and graduate programs through effective documentation, strategic communications and comprehensive outreach activities.

The incumbent raises the profile of the programs among potential students, alumni, donors and prospects, the national and international research community, the local community and corporate sponsors through the production of professional, compelling and effective communications materials. S/he contributes to the recruitment of high-quality students and advances the department's research agenda by positioning SYDE as a leader in research, teaching and academic excellence through participation in a variety of outreach activities.

Key Accountabilities

Communications

- Identifies and develops external communication plans that support the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders and audiences
- Leads the development and implementation of an effective internal communications program to foster increased information sharing amongst the staff, faculty and other stakeholders
- Ensures websites are current, with timely news, events lectures/symposia and announcements, and other content that highlights the department's historical accomplishments
- Conducts research and interviews, writes and edits compelling copy for marketing collateral that supports strategic initiatives
- Writes and edits online content in alignment with digital content writing best practices and web accessibility legislative requirements and provides editorial support for web content as required
- Establishes a strategy for a meaningful social media presence using a variety of platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Provides strategic oversight on the use of digital communications to engage the internal and external community using a variety of tools such as web, social media, video, digital signage and emerging platforms
- Implements and leverages the department's websites, social media and digital signage to grow the department and program's online presence, reach out to audiences and promote the work of faculty
- Utilizes photography, video and other visual storytelling tools
- Liaises with the Faculty of Engineering's Advancement and Outreach to identify goals and strategies to ensure consistent messaging
- Edits external research promotion material

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- Attends events to compose notes capturing key messages, take photographs and network with attendees to provide content for stories
- Maintains an exceptional understanding of brand guidelines and promotes a unified look and feel for the department and BME program through the creation and maintenance of suites 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
- Advances equity, diversity and inclusion in all materials and efforts in consultation and collaboration with the Equity Office

Administration

- Edits undergraduate and graduate accreditation material, including CEAB and Academic Program Review reports and other submissions
- Writes and edits presentations, reports and documentation, including manuals, forms and processes to support SYDE administration
- Manages and performs the timely and accurate revision, dissemination, and storage of administrative documents
- Supports efforts to improve students' co-op employment opportunities
- Promotes graduate student research dissemination
- Works with program staff, department administration and stakeholders to support administrative functions
- Works with Creative Services to update and develop new print and digital communications, including reports, brochures and posters
- Organizes photoshoots as required
- Builds relationships with faculty and staff to maintain awareness of teaching and research activities
- Completes other duties as required by SYDE Chair and Administrative Officer

Outreach

- Supports the Chair, BME Program Director and Associate Chair on outreach as well as Faculty of Engineering's (FoE) Advancement and Outreach to enhance undergraduate outreach activities
- Collaborates on graduate recruitment efforts
- Works with FoE's Advancement and Outreach to support alumni engagement and raise funds
- Coordinates special events
- Maintains a running list of events, lectures and student-run projects to which alumni may be invited

Award Nominations and Recognition

- Identifies awards of potential interest to faculty members and promotes awards for nomination purposes
- Liaises with award agencies and other partners to garner honours and distinctions for faculty members. Alumni, staff, and students
- Solicits reference letters from external sources, prepares drafts of nomination letters as needed, and coordinates information from nominators and award nominees, nomination letters, expert reviews, and other necessary materials for the files
- Prepares award nomination and recognition packages and reviews nomination dossiers
- Serves on the Department Awards Committee

Research Promotion

- Is knowledgeable of faculty members' areas of expertise and SYDE/BME's priority projects and research focuses

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- Reviews portions of grant applications, edits and refines grant proposals prior to submission, especially sections related to department infrastructure and capabilities
- Liaises with Chair and Office of Research regarding grant writing assistance
- Collects relevant data on research achievements, funding and success rate statistics

**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

- University degree in communications or relevant discipline, or an equivalent combination of education and experience

Experience

- Four years relevant experience in communications and web content management tools, including social media platforms preferably in an academic setting
- Working understanding of content areas in the fields of systems and/or biomedical engineering
- Demonstrated experience writing communication pieces, editing and proofreading short and long copy
- Experience with content management systems (Drupal) and managing social media accounts
- Intermediate experience with MS Office, SharePoint, Adobe, Waterloo Content Management System (WCMS), and editing software
- Experience with publication software, video editing and photo editing software

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Ability to work effectively and diplomatically with individuals and groups with diverse perspectives and backgrounds
- Ability to communicate effectively and foster positive relations in a dispersed environment
- Ability to develop and maintain cooperative and productive working relationships
- Proven ability in managing multiple-source projects that require leadership and integrity when dealing with a variety of stakeholder groups
- Demonstrated ability to adapt writing styles for various purposes, excellent written communication skills, and ability to compose reports and other written materials
- Ability to think critically and analytically, and distill complex information in a manner that facilitates understanding and brings research and teaching to life for different audiences
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and deal with information of a sensitive nature with discretion
- Demonstrated ability to work independently with a high level of initiative and flexibility to accomplish objectives in an environment with changing priorities and constant interruptions
- High level of accuracy and attention to detail
- Strong organizational and time management skills to manage multiple priorities, simultaneous or overlapping deadlines, and work effectively under pressure
- Ability to learn new web tools and adapt to new technologies
- Broad knowledge of the academic and research environment and sponsor funding guidelines

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** The incumbent deals with various levels of administration and must demonstrate leadership and tact. The Officer must influence and persuade others, with the ability to build

consensus and build alliances among various stakeholders. Internally, communicates with SYDE administration, faculty and staff; FoE's Advancement and Outreach; the University's Office of Research, Alumni Relations; Marketing and Strategic Initiatives, etc. Externally, this position will have contact with donors, alumni, various engineering societies and agencies, the media, local community and national/international audiences.

- **Level of Responsibility:** The Officer has specialized work with minimal supervision. This role establishes communication strategies to ensure consistent messaging, as informing and engaging our communities is key to advancing SYDE's strategic goals. Mistimed information or inappropriate disclosure of confidential material may adversely affect the image and reputation of SYDE. The role researches and maintains a familiarity with current communication strategies and web/media technologies, and assists in development of web functionality.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** The role requires strategic thinking in an evolving environment, a collaborative approach, and appreciation for the varied audiences. The incumbent exercises initiative and judgement in establishing priorities and carrying tasks through to completion. The incumbent works independently and makes decisions regarding the content of communications, develops and implements communication plans and leads strategic projects.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** This position requires mental concentration, close attention to various stimuli, i.e. written material and verbal information. The work is varied and priorities must be managed to ensure all projects are completed successfully. There are deadline pressures with a demand for thoroughness and accuracy.
- **Working Environment:** Regular working hours in an office environment, some evening/weekend work may be required for special events or deadlines.