

Vice-President, Communications University of Toronto

Position Description

General Duties

Reporting to the President, the Vice-President, Communications is a key member of the University's tri-campus leadership team and plays a key role in the achievement of the University's goals as one of the top public research and teaching universities in the world.

The Vice President develops and leads integrated communications planning and measurement that is evidence-based and data-driven and situates communications as a strategic asset within and across the University.

The Vice-President supports and facilitates the ongoing development and execution of the University's and the Divisions' goals related to funding and ranking. This involves protecting, promoting, and enhancing UofT's standing internally and externally and demonstrating the University's accomplishments, its relevance, and its impact, locally and globally.

University of Toronto Communications (UTC) plays a shared leadership role with the Division of University Advancement (DUA) in brand management and marketing to diverse and diffuse audiences, locally, nationally, and internationally. To that end, the Vice-President Communications and the Vice-President Advancement co-lead the strategy and activities to actualize the new and exciting *Defy Gravity* campaign, which promotes sustainability, celebrates **inclusive excellence** and is supported by the three pillars of **excellence, access, and a caring community**.

As an administrative manager and leader, the Vice-President guides, mentors, and inspires a skilled team of professionals at the institutional level who in turn support and facilitate the work of communications and marketing colleagues across the three campuses and Divisions.

Within UofT's collegial, decentralized, tri-campus structure the Vice-President oversees an integrated communications framework to create alignment and consistency between the University's overarching strategic priorities and those of the Academic Divisions. This involves engaging, counseling, and building meaningful and trusted relationships with Deans, Principals and Vice-Presidents as well as local, national, and international media, academic, government, and industry partners.

Specific Duties

The Vice President's key duties include:

- Integrated Communications & Brand Marketing
- Engaging the University Community and its Academic Divisions
- Issues Management & Media/External Relations
- Team & Organizational Leadership

Integrated Communications & Brand Marketing

The Vice-President ensures a disciplined, robust, consistent, and integrated approach to internal and external communications and marketing. This includes:

- Providing strategic leadership and oversight to a broad range of university-wide activities and initiatives.
- Enhancing the effectiveness and timeliness of internal communications and consistent messaging to the UofT community, locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Overseeing a global media strategy, using traditional, social, and new/digital platforms to amplify and highlight UofT success stories.
- Embracing, promoting, and delivering on the UofT's new *Defy Gravity* brand campaign.
- Bringing to life the three pillars of *excellence, access and a caring community* that underpin the *Defy Gravity* brand.
- Leading and influencing brand partnerships to ensure alignment with UofT's values, mission and brand promise in *Defy Gravity*.
- Measuring, tracking and quantifying progress, impact and success of communications strategies, choices, and initiatives to inform future decisions.
- Promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion within UTC and across the institution.
- Widening UofT's breadth, brand and reach into promising new regions and markets around the world.

Engaging the UofT Community and its Academic Divisions

The Vice-President works in support of and service to the University community, its three campuses, Academic Divisions, shared-service (central) portfolios, faculty, staff, and students (current and future). This includes:

- Articulating and fully embracing the distinct strengths of the University's tri-campus system.
- Consulting, collaborating, and partnering with members of the Vice-Presidential team, Deans, Principals, and other institutional and Divisional leaders, to advance and evolve UofT's communications strategy.
- Developing and co-creating initiatives and compelling storylines that are aligned with and help to promote and actualize the *Defy Gravity* brand, in Canada and around the world.
- Building on the reputation of UofT and Toronto as a welcoming and inclusive community and a global hub of excellence in research, innovation and education.
- Advancing the international recruitment of talented faculty and students by leveraging and capitalizing on the University's unique location, and strategic advantage, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and one of the most diverse regions in the world.
- Developing the communications framework and tools for the Divisions to advance their priorities (research, recruitment, advancement, partnerships, expansion, etc.) in line with the those of the University.
- Supporting recruitment communications and harnessing the power and enthusiasm of graduate students, as UofT ambassadors, to continue to attract the best and brightest students and researchers.

Issues Management & Media/External Relations

The Vice-President is the University's communications lead, strategist, and key point person to internal and external communities. This includes:

- Leading and promoting the value of proactive brand journalism at the University and Division levels.
- Overseeing and supporting the institution's issues management and media response framework, working collaboratively with other central portfolios, ensuring it is accessible to and understood by colleagues and Division media leads.
- Ensuring effective, efficient, and timely messaging and information flow to key audiences and publics.
- Advising on and influencing a range of media matters that require effective management and uniform messaging.
- Training and being a sounding board to the President, Vice-Presidents, Deans and other leaders on issues management and effective media relations/responses.
- Keeping University senior management apprised of important matters by scanning the local and global environment and identifying concerns and opportunities that require their attention/action.
- Serving on various issues management and response teams and *ad hoc* committees as required.
- Acting as a University spokesperson and ambassador to many external publics, in Canada and beyond, on a variety of emerging and on-going issues.

Team & Organizational Leadership

The Vice-President leads a responsive, progressive, and service-oriented UTC office and a talented and highly skilled team of communications professionals. This includes:

- Setting the tone for a culture of excellence and belonging that is innovative and creative, and encouraging of experimentation and measured risk in pursuit of success.
- Inspiring, mentoring, and engaging the team, providing them with the space and encouragement to boldly experiment, innovate, and create/co-create with colleagues.
- Assessing individual and team performance and training and development needs to support their success and ongoing professional growth.
- Recruiting and retaining talent to the University communications team and supporting the Divisions with their recruitment and retention efforts.
- Ensuring that staff remain current and knowledgeable on new/best practices, digital tools, practices, strategies, and policies, as a champion of talent development.
- Setting and articulating clear priorities, accountabilities, and expectations for the team and providing them with strategic and tactical advice and guidance.
- Identifying staff resource needs and leading and participating on staffing committees.
- Participating in the development of the Communications budget, and in ensuring funds are spent in a cost-effective manner.

The Profile of the Ideal Candidate

The Vice-President as the University's senior communications executive will have experience developing and executing strategies and plans as well as providing marketing communications counsel and leadership in a complex, decentralized, multi-stakeholder organization. The Vice-President will have extensive communications and marketing experience together with change management, innovation, coaching, influencing, and relationship-building skills.

As a leader and member of the UofT community, the Vice-President will embody and model the values of inclusive excellence: *excellence, access, and a caring community*

Experience & Knowledge

The Vice-President will have a long record of success at the senior level, with:

- Experience as a communications leader and executive, managing and leading teams, in a large, complex environment, ideally in a distributed, matrix operation with an international footprint.
- Knowledge and extensive experience in strategic positioning, reputation management, internal and external communications, issues and crises management, response planning, and media relations.
- Extensive knowledge of traditional, new, social, and digital media, knowledge sharing, and messaging platforms.
- Demonstrated experience working in close partnership with branding, marketing, and promotion.
- Extensive experience in and knowledge of effective and meaningful community building and engaging broad and diverse constituencies of stakeholders.
- Strong administrative and operational experience managing and improving policies, structures, strategy, and approaches.
- Success building and enhancing community and government partnerships.
- An understanding of or capacity to work effectively in the context of the culture, traditions, and values of a public, research-intensive university. Experience in, or a strong understanding of, the complexities of a large research university would be an asset.
- International experience and an appreciation for how to best engage with, communicate and market to domestic, regional, and global audiences.

Education and Qualifications

- An advanced university degree, or a combination of education and experience, preferably in a related discipline, i.e. communications, marketing, public relations, media relations, etc.

Skills & Abilities

The Vice-President is a highly skilled communications executive who brings:

- Strategic foresight and the ability to see the big picture.
- The expertise to lead all university communications and manage sensitive and confidential issues.
- Strong analytical thinking skills to recognize and understand complex issues and their implication on organizational image and reputation.

- Excellent listening, written, and oral communication skills.
- A digital first mindset and a facility for big data, and advanced digital communications tools, platforms, and applications.
- A highly nuanced understanding of how digital strategies can be optimized and tailored to diverse audiences around the world.
- The ability to lead, persuade, influence and inspire without direct authority.
- A demonstrated track record in managing people and teams with skill and sensitivity.
- The ability to see and support the broader governance and management of the University.
- The diplomacy and acuity to navigate organizational and political complexity within an academic and highly decentralized environment.
- The ability to create, cocreate, and convey compelling stories to the public, directly, or through the media.
- Great comfort and confidence representing UofT to audiences across its campuses, Divisions, the local communities and region, the province, and internationally.
- An ability to engender the trust and respect of faculty, staff, and students.
- Comfort and skill in an external, community facing capacity.

Personal Characteristics

The ideal Vice-President is a multi-dimensional leader, respected thought partner, systems thinker, and engaging community builder with:

- Unquestioned integrity and judgement.
- An authentically collaborative approach suited for a collegial decision-making environment.
- A deeply embedded service orientation and an inclination to bringing solutions.
- Cultural awareness and appreciation for the importance of bespoke and customized messaging.
- A global and expansive outlook to “think big and do big” to have meaningful, ethical, and sustainable impact.
- Confidence, courage, and composure to challenge the status quo, transform behaviours, and make or influence bold decisions and choices.
- Exceptional facilitation skills and a consensus orientation.
- A reputation for discretion, fairness, and objectivity.
- A supportive and responsive manner.
- A passion for and deep commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and a caring and welcoming community.
- A demonstrable commitment to student success and well-being.
- A deep and genuine passion for public higher education.
- A disciplined, organized, and integrative mindset in the management of priorities, relationships, and resources.