THE OPPORTUNITY

This is a pivotal and exciting time at Kansas State University with a new president, a bold economic prosperity plan, a record year for research awards, a record fundraising year, the opening of a $1+ billion-dollar National Bio and Agro-defense facility, and the strongest state budget supporting higher education in a decade.

This is an exceptional opportunity to join an inspiring R1 institution as its next strategic visionary to enhance the institution’s communications, brand vision, and public relations campaigns, both nationally and internationally. Reporting to the President and serving as a key member of the President’s Cabinet, the next Vice President for Communications & Marketing (VPCM) is an accomplished communications professional of unquestioned integrity, sound judgment, and considerable energy, with a commitment to collaborative work and empowerment, a passion for higher education, the ability to embrace, support and communicate vision internally and externally.

The VPCM is responsible for the development, integration, and implementation of public relations and marketing activities that communicate about and advance the strategic direction and positioning of the University and its leadership. The successful candidate brings strong and proven strategic leadership skills. Highly developed writing and communication skills are essential tools in communicating with multiple constituent groups.

Leading the division of communications and marketing, the next VPCM serves as the chief communications officer for Kansas State University and leads a centralized strategic communications team that provides reputation management, crisis communications and proactive public relations efforts. Moreover, the VPCM will drive the internal communications at the institutional level while setting the overall strategy for institutional responses, and providing counsel to the university president, provost, cabinet, and deans. Serving on the Crisis Management Team, the VPCM will respond to crises that develop during the year.
Duties and Responsibilities:

Public Relations, Reputation Management, and Crisis Communications:

• Serves as the university’s official spokesperson, leading a strategic communications team to provide proactive public relations efforts, reputation management, and crisis communications. Oversees public relations efforts, including generation of content that compellingly tells the institutional story and mission. Enhances visibility of university efforts nationally and internationally. Develops and implements plans to strengthen ties to local, state, and national media. Assists in the development of communications strategy with local and state governments and participates in outreach activities to foster relationships with local, state, and federal stakeholders.

• Sets strategy for institutional responses, provides counsel to the university president, provost, cabinet, and deans. Includes primary responsibility for internal communications at the institutional level to the university community. Serves on the Crisis Management Team and develops and implements crisis communication plans, as necessary. Effectively leverages technology, including social media, multimedia, and video content to advance communication goals. Leads a team in building K-State’s presence and brand in local, state, and national media outlets.

Institutional Marketing and Communications:

• Leads overall marketing efforts for the university. Working collaboratively with others, coordinates the development and implementation of the university’s overall integrated marketing and communications strategy to enhance the university’s visibility and reputation. Establishes priorities for all marketing, advertising, website, public relations, social media, and communication initiatives and projects.

• Supports enrollment and admissions efforts by providing strategic communications services to assist recruiting efforts and grow enrollment. In partnership with the vice provost for enrollment management and others, executes in-state and national recruiting efforts for undergraduate and graduate students, consistent with university strategic enrollment plans. Division services include video, photography, design, media placements, marketing, news and communications, and virtual presence on websites and social media. Defines creative strategy at the university level and drives alignment with campuses, colleges, departments, and other major units. Manages the institutional advertising and marketing budget.

Institutional Branding:

• Leads collaborative efforts to create and manage a unified institutional brand strategy for the university. Convenes One Voice team consisting of K-State Athletics, K-State Alumni Association, KSU Foundation, and Kansas State University communicators ensuring alignment regarding brand identity, messaging, and style. Maintains strategic relationships with external communications partners, including K-State Athletics, K-State Alumni Association, KSU Foundation, Kansas Board of Regents, and other key constituents. Oversees university licensing efforts to ensure compliance with university brand standards. Recommends, develops, and maintains university-wide policies and guidelines related to branding, advertising, and marketing strategies. Serves as visionary brand steward and brand ambassador.

Division Leadership, Management, and Development:

• Leads and manages the Division of Communications and Marketing with overall responsibility for effective and efficient operations and services, budgetary planning and management, and personnel management and development. Promotes staff development, sets performance objectives, evaluates outcomes, and maintains accountability. Fosters a responsive and inclusive culture that welcomes change and innovation and values teamwork and collaboration. Sets priorities with finite resources, effectively planning and managing the financial resources and staffing of the division to meet current needs while allowing for attainment of strategic initiatives.
Minimum Qualifications:

- Bachelor’s degree in a relevant field.
- 7-10 years of experience with some or all of the following: communications, marketing, public relations, and brand building.
- Proven record of success in an administrative position with responsibility for guiding strategy; fiscal planning and management; supervising, motivating, and developing employees; and fostering diversity, belonging, and teamwork to create collaborative working relationships across culturally diverse groups.
- Demonstrated success as a strategic and creative planner, master collaborator, and relationship builder with strong interpersonal skills.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills with a demonstrated ability to articulate matters of complexity and nuance to multiple and varied groups of stakeholders.
- Proven success developing and implementing branding and marketing strategies to enhance institutional reputation and/or grow enrollment for a large, culturally diverse organization.
- Excellent organizational, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Knowledge of best practices, emerging issues, trends, and opportunities in university/higher education communications.
- Understanding of the scope and strategic impact of technology used in marketing and social media branding and promotion with experience strategically deploying marketing and communication tools to disseminate messages across difference platforms and to diverse audiences.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Master’s degree in a relevant field.
- Proven ability to initiate, lead, and facilitate change, successfully engaging with others to achieve results.
- Proven ability to adapt and execute strategy in a complex and evolving space and be comfortable with the ambiguity that accompanies a large public university.
- Higher education administrative leadership experience with similar responsibilities to this position.
- A deep understanding of and passion for the role of public higher education and firm grasp of the opportunities and advantages of a land-grant university with R1 status.
- Private industry experience in news media, public relations, communications, and/or marketing.

To learn more about Kansas State University, please visit our Human Capital Services website.
SEARCH PROCESS

Academic Career and Executive Search (ACES) is assisting Kansas State University. Inquiries, nominations, and applications will be treated confidentially.

Applications will be reviewed as they are received and should include a cover letter and curriculum vita. All applications are treated confidentially.

Please send inquiries and questions about the position to KSUVPCommunications@acesrch.com.

Please send nominations and referrals to nominations@acesrch.com.

Please do not email applications. To be viewed by the search firm, you must apply directly at ACES’ candidate portal.

For best consideration, please apply by September 6th. On-campus final interviews are expected to take place during fall 2022.

Applicants must be currently authorized to work in the United States at the time of employment.

Kansas State University is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, or status as a protected veteran.