

Job Title: Media Relations Specialist
College/Unit: University Advancement
Reports to: Director, Strategic Communications
Job Family: Specialist/Professional, Phase 2
Status & FTE: Full time; permanent
Position Review Date: January, 2013

Primary Purpose of the Position

The Media Relations Specialist creates and implements media relations strategies, with a focus on national media, to promote the university's strategic goals and build profile and visibility. The Specialist plays an integral role in the success the communications efforts of the university with the key goals of ensuring consistency of position and key messaging, reputation protection, and increasing the profile and understanding of the university on a local, regional and national level.

The Media Relations Specialist facilitates media requests, develops and implements media and issues management strategies to promote the university's strategic goals and build national visibility, and measures results.

Nature of the Work

Reporting to the Director, Strategic Communications, this highly collaborative media relations expert works closely with senior administration, faculty, staff and key stakeholders and communications professionals across the university to provide expertise and support for media profile of the university and implements best-practice media relations activities. The strategic communications team works with senior executives, and university marketing and communications professionals to achieve institutional communications and media relations goals, including enhancing the university's reputation. The Media Relations Specialist maintains a full understanding of the tools and processes available to leverage communications and public relations and must be knowledgeable of communications best-practices and university policies, guidelines and practices and ensure key university messages, themes and position are integrated in all media communications.

The Specialist exercises judgment and discretionary decision-making to promote the university to media outlets. The environment is complex with numerous competing deadlines both within the university and with reporters across Canada. The work requires a proactive, strategic approach and the ability to communicate effectively to diverse audiences through a variety of methods and communication mediums. Establishing and maintaining positive, mutually beneficial relationships and confidentiality is essential to success. Consequence of error is significant to the university's reputation and profile. The position requires periodic evening and weekend work.

University Advancement (UA) is responsible for institutional advancement programs (alumni and external relations, communications and fundraising), and as such is dedicated to supporting the advancement needs of all colleges, units and the university as a whole. UA is comprised of specialized teams including Advancement Services, Alumni Relations, Community Outreach and Engagement, Development, Finance and Trusts, First Nations & Métis Engagement and the University Marketing and Communications team (Alumni and Development Communications, College Communications, Internal Communications, Marketing, and Strategic Communications). More than 100 advancement professionals and support staff work at various locations including the UA office at Innovation Place, in colleges and schools across campus, at the Peter MacKinnon building, English River office and the Station 20 West office. The specialist is located in the central University Advancement office.

Accountabilities

- Develop and implement media relations strategies by proactively participating in and providing expertise to teams to engage and foster an atmosphere of collaborative problem-solving to ensure that the media relations needs of the university are met.

- Develop and implement proactive awareness and reputational-building media relations strategies by identifying university stories of interest at the local, regional and national level.
- Work collaboratively and in a transparent manner when dealing with media regarding issues management and other confidential and/or sensitive high-level communications.
- Implement media engagement strategies for key projects and effective communications strategies to convey messages to stakeholders.
- Act as a primary communications contact for media relations.
- Work with media to set up regular editorial board and news editor meetings with senior university administrators.
- Attending campus media conferences to facilitate media relations in person.
- Maintain confidentiality of proprietary information and support communication needs with regards to change management, institutional directions and messaging.
Execute the editorial process, including research, planning, writing, editing, proofreading, translation and approvals, to ensure that written and published communications (internal, external, online) materials are of high quality and in alignment with unit and institutional positioning directions.
- Enhance and protect the profile and reputation of the University of Saskatchewan
 - Identify possible communications and promotional media opportunities and develop and implement strategies to build the university's local, provincial, national and international profile.
 - Assist in connecting local, regional and national reporters with university experts to interview.
 - Identify upcoming media opportunities for university experts and facilitate interviews.
 - Identify and monitor possible communications issues or institutional risks and develop necessary media relations strategies as well as media briefings in alignment with university key messaging.
 - Work closely with the University Marketing and Communications team and Associate Vice-President, Communications to support media relations support as required.
 - Advocate the adoption of and steward university messaging, visual identity and position and ensure these are broadly understood and adopted.
 - Ensure the university strategic directions, integrated plan and university position is reflected in media relations through collaboration with key stakeholders and partners.
 - Share expertise with campus leaders and communications colleagues on the impacts of media relations strategies related to the reputation of the university.
- Work collaboratively with the Director, Strategic Communications to provide leading edge media relations strategies and tactics on time and on budget.
 - Work with the Marketing team to ensure alignment of marketing efforts with media relations efforts.
- Provide leadership and expertise to positively influence colleges and campus units to progressively achieve collaboratively defined media relations goals.
 - Develop and maintain positive professional relationships with key internal and external stakeholders;
 - Provide media training to faculty, staff and senior administration;
 - Maintain and continually enhance the university's media relations toolkit.
- Continue to refine the university's media monitoring systems and evolve a system for assessing, evaluating and reporting the outcomes of media relations in alignment with overarching communications benchmarks.
 - Meet regularly with portfolio stakeholders to review and evaluate activity and progress against established targets and benchmarks;
 - Work with Advancement Research Team on refining and improving the university's media monitoring abilities;
 - Adopt and promote a culture of assessment in media relations and marketing through diagnostic evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Be aware of evolving or changing communications and media relations strategies and best-practice and provide recommendations regarding the impact of those changes.

Education, Experience and Skills

Education: An undergraduate degree or graduate degree in communications or journalism or a closely-related discipline. Accreditation with IABC or CPRS would be considered an asset.

Experience: A minimum of five years of directly-related experience in media relations with a thorough understanding of the value of effective media relations; experience in understanding and preparing stakeholders for media interviews.

Skills: Results oriented with strong evidence of relationship building, ability to engage people, work collaboratively, proven communications skills (written and verbal); creative, highly organized and self-motivated; ability to prioritize and meet deadlines; demonstrated ability to think and act strategically; ability to make data-driven decisions and a demonstrated commitment to quality; proficiency in contemporary computer applications; a working knowledge of current and leading industry trends and familiarity with applicable provincial, federal, and international legislation. Photography skills would be considered an asset.

Competencies

Leadership / Vision

The demonstrated ability to build a shared, compelling and credible vision of the future, influencing people to ensure outcomes that support achieving the vision; applicable to all jobs at all levels; a culture of leadership.

- Influences others to share and commit to a common vision
- Fosters positive work and learning environments
- Values and considers differing points of view before making a decision
- Makes timely decisions even when unpopular or difficult
- Anticipates how decisions affect people
- Delegates authority and responsibility
- Holds others accountable for making and meeting commitments
- Provides continuous, honest and supportive feedback
- Supports development and continuous improvement

Support for Progress

The demonstrated ability to initiate, implement, and support innovation and institutional change and enhance programs and services.

- Challenges the status quo
- Advocates innovation and creativity, even when risk is involved
- Adapts and maintains productivity in an atmosphere of changing practices
- Demonstrates an optimistic attitude towards change
- Demonstrates emotional maturity and resiliency in difficult circumstances
- Engages and supports others in the change process
- Works with, rather than resists, forces of change

Results Orientation

Focuses on results and completing objectives within the framework defined by the University's plans and policies.

- Readily accepts and responds to challenges
- Directly confronts problems and persists in finding solution
- Remains optimistic and persistent in the face of adversity
- Demonstrates courage rather than avoidance to resolve difficult issues
- Identifies shared interests to develop positive outcomes
- Focuses on facts and root causes rather than reacting to symptoms
- Celebrates successes and learns from mistakes

Personal Effectiveness

Demonstrates an ability to reflect, clarify and commit to what is important, take responsibility for growth and development, and contribute to positive and productive work and learning environments.

- Demonstrates integrity and ethical conduct in words and deeds
- Keeps promises and commitments even when unpopular or difficult
- Seeks out and appreciates feedback, demonstrating a commitment to learning
- Accepts ownership and responsibility for outcomes
- Learns and recovers from setbacks / mistakes
- Shares expertise willingly and is sought out as a resource for others
- Forgoes personal recognition in support of success of others
- Takes responsibility for balancing work and personal commitments

Communication

The demonstrated ability to convey information and ideas to individuals in a manner that engages the audience and helps them understand, retain, and respond to the message.

- Communicates clearly and ensures understanding
- Listens actively to understand others' points of view
- Provides useful and valuable information to others
- Demonstrates an awareness of the effects of communications on others
- Understands and demonstrates the need for confidentiality and discretion

Relationship Building

The demonstrated ability to develop the rapport necessary to build, maintain and/or strengthen partnerships and relationships inside and outside of the University.

- Seeks out and promotes positive relationships
- Builds opportunities through collaboration and partnerships
- Maximizes opportunities to achieve outcomes through or with others
- Demonstrates understanding, respect and concern for others
- Participates willingly and openly supports team decisions
- Proactively deals with conflict by openly addressing problems