The University of Virginia seeks nominations and applications for a visionary leader to fill the newly created position of Chief Communications Officer (CCO).

The Role

The CCO will report directly to the President and be a member of the President’s Cabinet. He/she will be a creative communications leader who can redesign the organizational structure to allow the university to communicate most effectively with a variety of constituents, using a broad range of traditional and electronic media. University Communications will work in close partnership with Vice Presidents, Centers, and school-level communications teams, sharing their talents, knowledge, and skills and building on a history of collaboration.

The overriding objective of the new organization is to generate widespread understanding, engagement, and financial support for the advancement of Thomas Jefferson’s vision of a forward-thinking global university, the value of higher education in America, and the impact of university teaching, research, and service on the world. The CCO will lead a strong team to create clear and consistent messages and to disseminate them with integrated and innovative approaches in order to provide best-in-class service to our various constituencies.

The CCO will engage key target audiences and tell the University’s story through a variety of creative methods, including new media, social networking, direct marketing, video, print, web, email, and the news media. Enhanced testing and measurement will be important in determining the effectiveness of each method.

University Communications will support the institutional mission of education, research, service, and health care with a special emphasis on areas identified by the President and the Board of Visitors and solidifying, managing and advancing the University’s brand. In this role, the Chief Communications Officer is expected to engage communication leadership across the University to align and strengthen the University’s overall and respective unit brands.

The CCO will be responsible for leading and managing an effective, results-oriented, and collaborative team including, but not limited to, managing staff performance and development goals while promoting a culture of continuous improvement that values learning and a commitment to quality. The CCO will successfully manage resources within an environment committed to productivity and efficiency elevating the University of Virginia as a highly-referenced authority versus elite national peers.
Background

For more than a decade, Public Affairs was housed within the University’s Office of Development and Public Affairs. President Teresa Sullivan has separated the University’s central communication function from its former location within the Office of Development and Public Affairs, a change that will strengthen both central communication and advancement communication. While the CCO will frequently work in close partnership with the Development Office to provide guidance on effective and consistent messaging and branding, primary responsibilities will center on leading the broader efforts to tell the University’s story to the world. Nationally, demands on university communication operations continue to grow and evolve, and University Communications must adapt quickly and effectively in order to provide best-in-class service to our various constituencies.

The Organization

The University of Virginia is distinctive among institutions of higher education. Founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, the University sustains the ideal of developing leaders who are prepared to shape the future of the nation. The University is public, while nourished by the strong support of its alumni and others in the private sector. The students who attend have been chosen because they show exceptional promise. By building on the legacy of the founder, the University of Virginia continues to play a key role in shaping the future of the nation and the world.

The University of Virginia comprises eleven schools in Charlottesville (the School of Architecture, the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, the McIntire School of Commerce, the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, the Darden School of Business, the Curry School of Education, the School of Engineering & Applied Science, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, the School of Nursing, and the Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy), plus the liberal arts College at Wise in southwest Virginia. The University offers 51 bachelor’s degrees in 47 fields, 83 master’s degrees in 66 fields, six educational specialist degrees, two first professional degrees (law and medicine), several dual graduate degrees, and 59 doctoral degrees in 58 fields.

The University remains the No. 2 public university, and No. 25 overall, in the 2012 edition of the U.S. News and World Report rankings. In the 14 years since U.S. News began ranking public universities as a separate category, U.Va. has ranked either No. 1 or No. 2. The University’s schools and programs also rank among the best in the United States. The Schools of Architecture, Commerce and Law rank among the top ten in their fields in the U.S. News and World Report rankings. The University’s language departments, such as Spanish, German and French, regularly rank among the highest in the nation; other leading programs at the University include English, biomedical engineering, economics, history, medicine, nursing, physics, cell biology, physiology, psychology, and religious studies.
At the heart of the University’s campus – or the Grounds, as it is called at U.VA. – is the “Academical Village,” a U-shaped group of buildings designed by the founder Thomas Jefferson and set around an open space known as the Lawn. Jefferson envisioned this arrangement as well suited to the frequent contact and shared learning between professors and students that define the ideal college experience.

Today, the Lawn remains the center of University life. Each year, thousands of visitors tour the Rotunda, which is also a venue for lectures, social events, student activities, and meetings. The Academical Village is considered one of the world’s great cultural treasures, and the University Architect continues to abide by the principles that define the historic core of the grounds while planning for the future needs of the institution. The University of Virginia was the first university to be chosen as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The University community includes approximately 13,900 full and part-time employees, including the University of Virginia Health System. There are more than 21,000 students – 14,600 undergraduates and 6,500 graduate and professional students.

While national rankings are notable achievements, the University’s success can best be measured by the quality of the students who attend. They are diverse, smart and engaged. U.VA. students bring with them a sense of creativity, engagement, and vitality that manifests itself inside and outside the classroom. The University has a strong culture of student self-governance, a valued honor system, and student activities that make the University an exciting place.

U.V.A. is home to a variety of artistic, cultural, athletic and outdoor activities year-round. Theatergoers attend on-Grounds productions by the Department of Drama and Heritage Theatre Festival. The University of Virginia Art Museums present special exhibitions and maintain a permanent collection of more than 10,000 objects from around the world. U.V.A. also sponsors an evening concert series and concerts by local bands and symphony orchestras. The Virginia Film Festival and Festival of the Book are two cultural events that support the local community which is sponsored by the University.

U.V.A. football games at Scott Stadium draw approximately 350,000 spectators annually. The John Paul Jones Arena, home to the U.V.A. Basketball teams, also hosts concerts, family shows, and community events. In addition, the strength of U.V.A.’s baseball, soccer, lacrosse and other athletic programs attracts a significant following. The University offers several indoor and outdoor fitness facilities, including the 54,300 square foot Aquatic & Fitness Center, outdoor tracks for jogging, and fields for intramural sports and individual recreation. University employees receive discounts to selected arena shows and events and a reduced rate for memberships to University fitness centers.

The operating budget for FY 2012-13 for the entire University totals $2.6 billion. Of the total budget, $1.4 billion relates to the Academic Division, $1.2 billion to the Medical Center, and $36.3 million to the University of Virginia’s College at Wise. State general funds represent
10.2% of the Academic Division budget and 5.8% of the total University of Virginia operating budget. Including endowment investments held by the seven related foundations reported as component units, the combined University system endowment is approximately $5.35 billion. The University maintains triple-A bond ratings from all three major credit rating agencies.

CANDIDATE SPECIFICATION: KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Critical Competencies for Success

• *Operational and Visionary Leadership:* Focus on efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, and continuous improvement with demonstrable results. Ability to think both tactically and strategically to develop and improve operational systems. A desire to actively engage in mentorship and development of staff. Ability to recruit, motivate, and retain a high-performance workforce.

• *Relationship Builder:* Exceptional relationship builder, internally and externally, with colleagues, stakeholders, and staff. Accessible and responsive with the ability to provide the highest level of customer service, investing the time to be a presence across the University. Interact effectively with people at all levels of the organization.

• *Creativity and Innovation:* Broad vision of the future of communications and marketing and assertiveness in taking risks and presenting and selling ideas, combined with a mature sensitivity to the values and expectations of others. Thoughtful and well-articulated understanding of the competitive and ever-changing national and international environment for communications.

Other Characteristics

• Intellectual depth, wisdom, and collaborative skills;

• High energy, drive, and internal motivation;

• Adaptable and resilient;

• Transparent and trustworthy;

• Passionate and innately curious.
POSITION SPECIFICATION

Key Relationships

Reports to: President, University of Virginia

Direct Reports: Audio/Visual
Web Communications
Media Relations
Marketing
Community Relations

Key Priorities

• Provide visionary leadership fostering innovation and building bridges – internally and externally – to create opportunities that strengthen strategic goals;
• Play a catalytic role in enhancing the visibility of the University;
• Oversee the day-to-day operations including budgeting, planning, staff development, management, and other activities;
• Support an environment that recognizes excellence and promotes a positive atmosphere of achievement and pride;
• Create and effectively deploy marketing/public relations strategy that will allow the University to cultivate and enhance meaningful relationships with targeted audiences, including, but not limited to, media, political leaders, prospective students, students, alumni, parents, friends/donors, faculty, staff, patients, the Charlottesville/Albemarle community, and key constituents across the Commonwealth, nationally, and internationally;
• Oversee development of primary institutional University print communications including the annual report, marketing, collateral materials, admissions materials, and electronic communication including the University’s website and new media;
• Develop long and short-term actionable social media strategies and associated metrics in support of the University’s strategic plan;
• Promote a culture of high standards and continuous improvement that emphasizes learning and a commitment to quality through a supportive and collaborative approach;
• Provide backup as the University spokesperson for crisis management and communication.
Qualifications

The ideal candidate will be an accomplished professional with significant experience in communications and marketing, preferably within a higher education institution or other highly complex and decentralized organization.

In addition, the Chief Communications Officer will have a track record that includes:

- Passionate commitment and enthusiasm for leadership and success in creating and managing large teams including communications, marketing, news, and media;
- Broad vision of the future of communications and marketing with strong understanding of the latest trends and technology;
- Superior communication, relationship building, transparency, and fairness;
- Strategic communications planning and crisis management with an understanding of issues in higher education, especially public higher education;
- Successful track record of creating innovative approaches for communicating with a wide range of audiences;
- Experience in executing a successful and strategic social media campaign with proven results;
- Demonstrated ability to creatively manage a budget in an environment of limited funding and resources;
- Successful record of publications and/or high-visibility media placements;
- Commitment to high performance and results;
- A Master’s degree in a related field or a Bachelor’s degree with appropriate experience.

To Apply

To express interest or nominate someone for this opportunity, send a cover letter and resume to Susan Talbert, University of Virginia Executive Search Group, at sht2n@virginia.edu.

The position will remain open until filled, and the search will be carried out with full confidentiality.

The University of Virginia is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer committed to diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.