POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title: Manager, Communications and Government Relations
Department: Marketing and Communications
Position Status: Active
Employment Type: Full-time (35 hours per week)

POSITION SUMMARY (Overview and Purpose)

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations is the Students’ Union’s (SU) expert on government relations and lobbying, strategic communications, advocacy initiatives and events, issues management, and media relations. They coach and support the student government and advise SU staff on a range of matters and are responsible for maintaining the SU’s reputation with external stakeholders and the public. Specifically, the Manager, Communications and Government Relations will:

- advise on institutional (University of Calgary) communications and issues, governmental programs, and public policy initiatives that have the potential to impact students and/or the SU,
- manage relations and lobbying efforts with all levels of government, working to persuasively communicate the SU’s policy positions and influence decision-makers,
- recommend and support institutional advocacy directions, working to ensure post-secondary education (PSE) remains accessible and affordable,
- plan and execute on-campus initiatives and events to build awareness of and support for SU advocacy positions,
- guide relations with on and off-campus media outlets and coach SU spokespeople towards effective public communication, and
- oversee stakeholder relations with our members (University of Calgary undergraduate students).

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations reports to, and often collaborates with, the SU’s Director, Marketing and Communications.

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations especially supports the Vice President External and the President in identifying current and emerging concerns related to the organization’s political priorities and helps identify appropriate strategies and tactics to successfully move priorities onto the public agenda.
The Manager, Communications and Government Relations closely collaborates with SU staff in the policy/governance and academic areas to ensure that advocacy initiatives are effectively planned, coordinated, communicated, and executed. Working in a youthful and highly collaborative environment, they must be able to manage multiple projects simultaneously, be excellent at organization and prioritization, be nimble enough to pivot as circumstances and priorities change and be patient mentors of young, elected leaders.

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations supervises the SU’s Advocacy Coordinator and directs their research, advocacy, and other activities.

**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Government Relations**

- Evaluates and advises on the strategy and policy implications of external lobbying and advocacy organizations’ priorities and initiatives (and Canadian Alliance of Student Associations)
- Attends governmental meetings and committees with the Vice President External and President, and creates summaries, minutes, and/or reports to ensure information is managed, communicated, and followed up on as required
- Assists the Vice President External and President with coordinating the development and approval of SU political priorities, ensuring our institutional and external advocacy objectives are aligned
- Uses knowledge of influencing tactics and techniques to assist the Vice President External and President with garnering support for and advancing the SU’s political priorities
- Works with the Vice President External and President to develop opportunities for member consultation on key political issues
- Plans and executes the annual Calgary Leaders Dinner event, a key government relations opportunity for the SU
- Ensures that the SU is compliant with the Alberta Lobbyist Registry

**Institutional (University of Calgary) Advocacy**

- Works with the Policy Analyst to develop research plans, stakeholder surveys, and advocacy position papers
- Leads and administers the SU’s University and Government Relations Committee (UGRC) with support of the Advocacy Coordinator
- Provides administrative support, guidance, research, messaging, and preparation to the Executives to work with university administration through the Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee (TFCC)
- Provides administrative support and guidance to the Executives to work with university administration through the Student and Enrolment Services (SES) monthly meeting, including drafting the monthly meeting report.
• Liaises with the Policy Analyst to monitor and keep current on issues within the university environment and advises members of the Executive on matters related to university committees, boards, and issues with senior administration

• Provides administrative support and guidance to the Executives and elected students-at-large for their work on the Senate and related committees

• Provides administrative support and guidance to the President and elected student-at-large representative for their work on the Board of Governors and related committees

• Maintains a productive relationship with on-campus counterparts in media relations, strategic communications, and government relations

**Relationship-Building**

• Provides guidance, support, and strategies to the organization on relationship-building and maintenance of governmental relations on a local, regional, provincial, and national level

• Sets up meetings of SU elected officials with legislative members and/or other political representatives, and provides advice and guidance on meeting protocol

• Maintains effective relationships with external lobbying and advocacy organizations (CASA and CSA) through ongoing consultation/liaison with these groups

• Maintains information related to government contacts, public representatives, allied organizations, etc.

• Builds strong consultative relationships with the Vice President External (and other Executives as necessary) and supports them in orientation/transition, annual planning, and event coordination

• Liaises and builds relationships with media contacts, advertisers and sponsors, and university officials as required

**Communications and Media Relations**

• Prepares and coordinates briefing materials, discussion papers, reports, and correspondence on current issues for Executives

• Monitors the external environment (including news media, social media, and other relevant information sources) to identify developments that have potential to impact the SU

• Develops, recommends, and communicates strategic proposals and options that support the political and advocacy mandates of the SU, developing presentations, briefing notes, and other communications materials for use in advancing the Students’ Union’s position on pertinent public policy or advocacy matters

• Advises the Executives on external messaging and media relations strategies and tactics for issues related to the SU’s political and advocacy priorities

• Manages continuity of information on an ongoing basis and transitions the Executives on historical, current, and emerging issues and provides annual orientation on media relations, advocacy, and government relations to the Executives
• Maintains electronic information resources within the government relations area to ensure the accuracy and currency of all information (e.g., web, CRM, etc.)

• Creates website content and updates SU advocacy-related web pages, including posting media releases, updating media tracking with external links, and clearly communicating advocacy activity on a regular basis

• Monitors and shares relevant social media content from lobby groups and student associations

• Provides guidance and strategies to the Students’ Legislative Council’s (SLC) elected officials (faculty representatives) on media relations, relationship-building, and advocacy options

• Performs a productive relationship with on-campus media (e.g., The Gauntlet, UToday, etc.)

• Provides guidance and strategies to the Executives, SLC’s elected officials (faculty representatives), and SU staff on stakeholder relations and consultation

• Collaborates with the Student Services department to ensure the effective implementation of advocacy and stakeholder relations events and programs (e.g., rallies, forums, focus groups, etc.)

**Stakeholder Relations**

**LEADERSHIP**

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations provides informal leadership to the Executive through coaching and mentoring. They are the designated staff lead for the Vice President External.

The Manager, Communications and Government Relations supervises the SU’s Advocacy Coordinator.

**SCOPE OF INITIATIVE/JUDGEMENT**

**Freedom to Act/Autonomy/Responsibility for Results**

• While work priorities are generally established by the Executive, the position is expected to outline the implications and magnitude of various issues for Executive decision-makers to prioritize. The position also has responsibility for positively influencing the results of external initiatives, with final accountability residing with the Executive. The position also contributes as a stakeholder to the policy-making process.

**Consequence of Errors**

• Consequence of errors can be serious as improper advice or guidance on tactical initiatives could impact the reputation of, or cause a loss of confidence in the organization, and affect its chance for advancing its political priorities in the governmental sphere. Potential of creating errors is minimized by cross-collaboration with Executives and other staff experts.
Confidential Data

- Is privy to confidential and sensitive information from senior decision makers.

INFLUENCE – INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

Internal Contacts

- Interacts daily with the Vice President External and President to exchange and collect information, and to provide guidance and advice. Regularly interacts with the Policy Analyst to coordinate research requirements and legislative action items. Regularly interacts with the General Manager and Director, Marketing and Communications to develop communication strategies and materials and to collaborate on external media approaches.

External Contacts

- Regularly interacts with lobby and advocacy groups to exchange information, and occasionally directly with other university student associations for information exchange purposes.
- Interacts with members of the government and/or political assistants to create and/or maintain networks, gather information, and schedule meetings as required.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The position works in an office environment and spends a significant amount of time reading, researching, communicating, and attending meetings. Some additional hours beyond the normal work week are required during peak times of organizational activity.

Other notable working conditions

- Attends evening and weekend meetings as needed
- Engages regularly in travel to/from meetings at local, provincial, and national locations as required

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES

- Possesses strong written, verbal and listening skills; understands different audiences and adapts communication styles and media accordingly, as well as demonstrates an overall collaborative and positive communication style
- Excellent organizational, planning, and time management skills, including balancing of quality and timeliness of outputs for multiple projects or files, while coping well with ambiguity, uncertainty, emerging issues, and tight deadlines
- Adept at gathering and interpreting information and intelligence from a wide range of sources with ability to observe inter-connections and identify links
- Possesses sound judgment, excellent political acumen and comprehensive knowledge of the public policy environment concerning PSE-related legislative and regulatory processes and decision-making
• Proven general research skills that include the ability to conduct research, analyze information, articulate alternatives, draw conclusions and provide practical recommendations to decision makers on issues

• Actively seeks out opportunities to build and maintain a network of beneficial contacts, including political representatives, political allies, and potential information links

• Applies a consultative approach, in combination with knowledge and ideas, to lead to consensual solutions, and uses facilitation and negotiation skills to effect and influence change

• Displays a proven ability to manage advocacy projects and initiatives including conducting problem and political analysis, evaluating the probability of achieving change, identifying change objectives, conducting stakeholder analysis and consultation, constructing messages, tactics and materials, and completing monitoring and evaluation of advocacy initiatives

• Ability to maintain confidentiality of information, and display professionalism, discretion and sound judgment

• Ability to work in a non-partisan environment

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Requirements - University degree in political science, public policy, communications, or equivalent along with three years related experience

• Previous experience gained within a post-secondary education, government, public sector or non-profit setting is preferred

• A valid Alberta driver’s license, with ability to engage in planned and ad hoc travel is required

• An equivalent combination of education and experience would be considered

Required Computer Skills/Experience

• Intermediate computer skills using the Microsoft suite of software (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook), WordPress, and various internet research tools

• Advocacy/external website maintenance and content inventory (ensuring published content is current; coordinating content review process, coordinating creation and supply of fresh content)

• Incumbent will also be required to operate photocopiers, scanners, email, and other standard office equipment to perform the duties of this position