Senior Government Relations Officer

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) invites applications for the position of Senior Government Relations Officer.

COU is the forum for Ontario’s universities to collaborate and advocate in support of their shared mission to the benefit and prosperity of students, communities and the province of Ontario.

Our work advances postsecondary education through collective advocacy, sector collaboration and a range of shared services for our members, Ontario’s universities. COU Secretariat is a collaborative team of professionals where each employee contributes directly to the success of the organization. COU is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion and supports equal opportunity to all employees.

We are seeking an experienced Public Affairs professional with 8+ years of demonstrated government relations and issues management experience to work closely with the Manager, Government and Stakeholder Relations, the Vice-President of Public Affairs and the Public Affairs team, as well as COU members to advance the interests of Ontario’s universities with government, political parties and key external stakeholders through senior level strategic advice and advocacy.

The Senior Government Relations Officer provides leadership and strategic-level support to assigned Public Affairs related committees.

The Senior Government Relations Officer works closely with COU colleagues on government and stakeholder relations strategies.

COU invites applications from experienced professionals with backgrounds in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. We offer a competitive total compensation package, generous time off, professional development and a collaborative work environment in the heart of downtown Toronto’s Discovery District.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Government Relations

• Provides advice and supports the development and execution of COU’s annual government relations advocacy strategy, proposing new ideas to the team to leverage key government milestones.
• Seeks new ways for government engagement to elevate the profile and priorities of Ontario’s universities and ladders these ideas up to the Manager and VP.
• Project manages the implementation of COU’s pre-budget government relations strategies and other submissions, as appropriate.
• Develops written and oral submissions to government, including pre-budget submissions and responses to consultations.
• Able to communicate and synthesize the work of COU and the sector in a clear, concise and effective way in government materials.
• Develops advocacy and outreach plans for individual issues or assigned policy priorities to support organizational objectives.
• Provides advice on political context and advocacy strategy to the Manager, VP and other colleagues and helps ensure organizational priorities, work plans and strategies reflect the context of government priorities and political realities.
• Identifies issues and takes the government relations lead on issues management to ensure that COU is able to respond and briefs members (as needed) in a timely manner. Provides strategic advice to COU’s Senior Leadership on appropriate responses.
• Provides advice on and insights into provincial government proceedings and processes.

Stakeholder Relations
• Supports the Manager and VP in maintaining and strengthening relationships with existing stakeholders and partners of the university sector, finding creative and innovative ways to engage stakeholders on joint priorities.
• Seeks opportunities to build relationships with new stakeholders on areas of alignment and ladders proposals up to the Manager and VP.
• Maintains ongoing contact and dialogue with government relations colleagues in member institutions to learn about priorities, seek advice and share information and intelligence.

Education and Experience:
• University degree in political science, public administration, public policy or another relevant field. Graduate degree is an asset.

Experience/skills:
• At least eight years of professional experience in government relations.
• Strong political acumen and issues sensitivity. Political campaign experience an asset.
• Ability to think strategically to identify opportunities for government relations and engagement with government officials, both the political and civil service, to advance COU’s advocacy.
• Superior writing and research skills, and the ability to speak persuasively in meetings and to larger groups.
• Superior interpersonal skills to work internally as an advisor on public affairs, as well externally building a broad network of stakeholder relationships.
• Deep understanding of politics and political parties, as well as the bureaucracy and machinery of government, including legislative processes and proceedings.
• Able to work independently but collaboratively with others as appropriate, and determine priorities on a day-to-day basis, organizing work to complete a wide variety of tasks on a timely basis.
• Strong analytical abilities to understand the impact of economic, political and stakeholder actions and to assess their potential threat and opportunity.
• Requires a strong understanding of issues and crisis management.
• Knowledge of or experience in the Ontario university sector is an asset.
• A strong network of government and stakeholder contacts is an asset.

Other:
• Demonstrated leadership capacity, as well as team-building; capacity to work collaboratively across the organization, with members and other stakeholders.
• Self-motivated and entrepreneurial in building new alliances, while being an ambassador for COU to other organizations.
• Commitment to continuous learning and professional development.
• Proven ability to work in a fast-paced environment; adaptable and responsive to shifting priorities.

Those qualified are asked to submit a cover letter with resume, outlining your experience and suitability for the position as well as salary expectations, to PARecruit@cou.ca by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 25, 2022.
Information regarding COU is available at www.cou.ca.

COU is an Equal Opportunity Employer that values the strength diversity brings to the workplace. We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

COU is committed to providing an inclusive and barrier free recruitment process to applicants with accessibility needs in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). If you require an accommodation during this process, please inform COU of your requirements.