



Senior Communications Officer

The [Council of Ontario Universities](#) (COU) invites applications for the position of Senior Communications Officer. **This is a 1-year contract position, with the possibility of transition to permanent status.**

The Council of Ontario Universities 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 21 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 corporate communications experience to work with the Director, Communications, 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 to the Public Affairs team.

The Senior Communications Officer works closely with COU colleagues on strategic communications, including taking a leading role in media relations, issues management as well as website and social media management.

COU invites applications from experienced professionals with backgrounds in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. We offer a competitive total compensation package and a close-knit and collaborative work environment in the heart of downtown Toronto's Discovery District. The hiring salary range for this position is \$74,926-\$88,912/year plus benefits package (remuneration commensurate to relevant skills and experience).

Responsibilities:

Media Relations and Issues Management

- Coordinates all requests for information and media enquiries
- Provides strategic advice to the Senior Management Team, with support from the Director, Communications, on appropriate responses and approach
- Able to effectively identify issues, as they arise, and takes the lead on the issues management group to ensure that COU is able to respond and brief members (as needed) in a timely manner
- Writes, edits and distributes effective media releases, statements/responses, op-eds, key messages, media preparation documents and strategies/plans
- Builds strategic relationships with media contacts
- Collects and maintains data for media relations database, maintains media contact lists and generates measurement reports

Website and Social Media Management

- Works with Director, Communications as well as website designers and providers, to plan, maintain and improve online presence, initiating new ways to enhance and develop COU's website presence
- Plans, implements, manages, monitors, and upgrades the organization's website
- Identifies, responds to and troubleshoots all website issues
- Conducts content audits to eliminate redundant and/or duplicate information
- Works to ensure the quality, efficiency and improve the user experience of the website regularly

- Uses excellent planning and organizational skills to work with the communications teams to strategically plan, prioritize and coordinate content for websites, social media activities and special projects across multiple channels that are aligned with the organization's strategy
- Leverages strong understanding of analytics tools to regularly measure and create strategies to grow audiences and web traffic
- Collaborates with all staff and management to ensure that the website aligns with brand strategy and meets the organization's standards
- Ensures full compliance on the website with all laws and regulations
- Keeps up-to-date with industry best practices and regularly monitors traditional and social media, influencers, government channels, and stakeholder communications for political developments, commentary, threats, and opportunities and shares critical information with the Director, Communications and other colleagues in a timely manner

Corporate Communications

- Assists in the development and implementation of strategic multi-channel communications plans to promote the priorities of the sector and build awareness of Ontario's universities
- Uses superior writing skills to gather information and produce a variety of products to advance postsecondary education and support engagement in public affairs dialogue, including compelling reports, key messages, web stories, speeches, news releases, presentations, briefing notes, presentations for government, etc.
- Uses a strategic communications and government relations lens to create and identify both traditional and new opportunities to elevate the profile and priorities of Ontario's universities
- Skilled in the use of 'plain language' to communicate complex data and ideas using clear, persuasive writing
- Synthesizes research and policy work of COU and other stakeholders into effective communications messages and accurate high-quality materials
- Works with designers to ensure strong graphic presentation of our data, issues and products
- Contributes to the organization of special events, including advance preparation of communication materials and onsite support

Member and Vendor Relations

- Builds relationships with university stakeholders, and suppliers to further COU goals
- Provides strategic support to Public Affairs related committees to seek input, bring issues to their attention, keep them informed of key COU initiatives and advocacy priorities, support their requests for information and advice, and plan and collaborate on advocacy strategies for major issues.

Education and Experience:

- University degree in communications, journalism or another relevant field. Graduate degree is an asset.

Skills:

- At least eight years of corporate communications experience, with a strong background in successful issues management and media relations, in addition to progressive professional experience in social media and website management
- Strong political acumen and issues sensitivity
- Ability to monitor announcements and news and identify potential impacts for the sector
- Strong understanding of media landscape, and demonstrated experience with reactive and proactive media requests
- Has working knowledge of HTML, Wordpress, Adobe Suite, Photoshop, content management systems (CMS), Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay Per Click (PPC)
- In-depth knowledge of current social media platforms, dashboards (Sprout Social) and metrics
- An understanding and familiarity of current and emerging trends in website design/maintenance and internet technologies including the analysis of web metrics
- Ability to work with external vendors in the creation of marketing material, online products and web development

- Superior writing, research and editing ability, as demonstrated by a portfolio of works, and the ability to speak persuasively in meetings and to larger groups
- Strong attention to detail with an analytical mind and excellent problem-solving skills
- Superior time management skills with the ability to multi-task
- Ability to think strategically to identify opportunities for communications campaigns to advance the advocacy agenda
- Expertise in design, graphics and layout is an asset
- Knowledge of or experience in the Ontario university sector is an asset
- A strong network of media, stakeholder and government contacts is an asset
- Government relations/campaign experience or a political science/public administration degree 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 COURecruit@cou.ca by **5 p.m. on Friday, March 24, 2023**.

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.