

WILLIAM & MARY

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Director of Crisis Communications

Mission Statement

In the Office of University Advancement, we create the conditions for opportunity – human, financial, & experiential – by garnering and stewarding the resources that advance William & Mary.

Position Summary

The Director of Crisis Communications leads the implementation and ongoing development of university-wide crisis communications strategies. Reporting to the Executive Director of Media Relations and housed in the Office of University Communications, the Director provides strategic counsel to senior leaders and partners across campus to ensure timely, accurate, and coordinated communications during emergencies and sensitive situations. The Director collaborates closely with Public Safety – including William & Mary Police, Emergency Management, the President's Office, Student Affairs, University Counsel, Information Technology, and other university leaders to develop and execute crisis communication plans, preparedness initiatives, and emergency messaging. The position operates with a high degree of independence and professional judgment, managing complex, time-sensitive, and highly visible communications that may significantly impact institutional reputation and stakeholder trust.

About the University

Founded by Royal Charter in 1693, William & Mary is America's first university. The Alma Mater of the Nation brings together the breadth of a public liberal arts and sciences education with the innovation of a preeminent global research university. Here, curiosity deepens into wisdom, shaping lives of meaning, distinction and purposeful impact. For more than 300 years, the university has convened great minds and hearts to meet the most pressing needs of our time.

About the Team

The Office of University Communications serves as the central communications office for the university. Within University Communications, the Media Relations team leads the university's crisis communication response, is responsible for media and other filming requests on campus, serves as the primary link to press and media on all communications fronts, provides media training and, in collaboration with the Content & Strategy and Web Development & Strategy,

coordinates university-wide promotional efforts. The office also works to promote and celebrate the work of faculty, staff and students and to promote the overall vision, mission and brand of William & Mary.

The Director will lead and foster a culture of belonging and trust that embraces all people and perspectives and ensures alignment with William & Mary's institutional values and strategic priorities. This is a hybrid position based in Williamsburg, Virginia, which offers a flexible work environment.

This position is classified as professional, meaning it is salaried and exempt from overtime. For benefits and leave purposes, this role falls under the "12-month Professionals & Faculty" classification on the HR website.

Please review the full position description with all job duties under the "Featured Job Opportunities" on the University Advancement recruitment website:

<https://advancement.wm.edu/come-work-with-us/open-positions/>

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, public relations, public affairs, emergency management, or a related field or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Significant, progressively responsible experience in communications, media relations, public affairs, crisis communications, emergency management communications, or a related field (typically 7 to 10 years).
- Demonstrated experience managing communications during high-profile, sensitive, or emergency situations.
- Experience serving as a media spokesperson for a complex organization.
- Exceptional writing, editing, and verbal communication skills.
- Experience providing communications counsel to senior leaders.
- Ability to exercise sound judgment and maintain confidentiality in complex and rapidly changing situations.
- Demonstrated ability to manage multiple priorities under deadline pressure.
- Experience collaborating across diverse stakeholder groups and organizational functions.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience in higher education, government, public safety, healthcare, or other complex organization(s).
- Experience with incident command systems, emergency operations, or crisis management teams.

Conditions of Employment

- This position may require overtime to include scheduled and unscheduled, nights and weekends and or holidays.

- This is a University Professional (UP), exempt position and is expected to exercise discretion and independent judgment in fulfilling assigned responsibilities.

Is the position remote work eligible? Hybrid (works remotely at least 1 day per week but not full-time).

Position Duties

Crisis and Emergency Communications, 45%

- Lead communication planning and response efforts for emergencies, critical incidents, and issues with potential reputational impact, including public safety incidents, severe weather events, cybersecurity incidents, student or employee fatalities, public health concerns, campus protests, and other emerging situations
- Lead the coordination and dissemination of emergency communications through appropriate channels, including media statements, web updates, social media, email, and campus alerts.
- Draft emergency-related holding statements and talking points for university leadership.
- Serve as the public information officer for the Office of Public Safety.
- Maintain the university's crisis communications plan and protocols working closely with Public Safety, including William & Mary Police and the Office of Emergency Management.

Issues Management, 20%

- Monitor emerging issues, media coverage, public sentiment, and stakeholder concerns that may affect the university's reputation.
- Advise the Executive Director and the Director of Media Relations on reputational risk in proactive pitches and strategic messaging. Prepare sensitive messaging, Q&A documents, background materials, and communication plans for university leadership.
- Work with senior administrators on communications approaches related to controversial or high-profile matters.

Media Relations, 15%

- Develop and manage media response strategies during emergencies and sensitive institutional matters.
- Collaborate with the Director of Media Relations to ensure alignment between crisis communications and ongoing media relations activities.

Strategic Communications & Executive Leadership Support, 10%

- Support major institutional announcements and participate in media relations work as needed when crises are absent.
- Provide communications counsel to executive leadership during emergencies and significant institutional issues.

- Develop briefing materials, talking points, statements, and stakeholder communications for senior administrators in coordination with the director of executive communications.
- Support communications related to meetings of the Board of Visitors and other governance bodies when issues of crisis are involved.
- Support university-wide strategic communications initiatives as assigned.

Other, 10%

- Serve as university spokesperson as required.
- Serve as an on-call representative for emergencies and other after-hours needs on a rotating basis.
- Manage University Communications' weekend on-call staffing scheduling & training.

Equal Opportunity Statement

EEO is the Law. Applicants can learn more about William & Mary's status as an equal opportunity employer by viewing the "Know Your Rights" poster published by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/know-your-rights-workplace-discrimination-illegal>

Background Check Statement

William & Mary is committed to providing a safe campus community. W&M conducts background investigations for applicants being considered for employment. Background investigations include reference checks, a criminal history record check, and when appropriate, a financial (credit) report or driving history check.

Benefits Summary Statement

William & Mary offers our employees a full array of benefits including retirement, health insurance with options for expanded dental and vision along with group and optional life insurance with coverage for spouse and children, flexible spending accounts, and an EAP (Employee Assistance Program). Our employees enjoy additional university benefits such as educational assistance, professional development, wellness benefits, and a robust holiday schedule. All employees have access to fitness facilities on campus. Staff members also have access to the university libraries, and much more.