

Amherst College



POSITION PROFILE

Vice President for Communications

2026

This search is managed in partnership with Opus Partners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Amherst College](#) invites applications and nominations for its next Vice President for Communications. Reporting to the President and serving as a member of the President's senior leadership team, the Vice President for Communications provides leadership and direction in determining how Amherst explains itself to the world and to its own community. In partnership with stakeholders across the College, the Vice President for Communications will bring clarity and focus to the College's communications by developing and executing an integrated, proactive communications strategy that builds upon Amherst College's identity, influence, and reputation, and which will advance the institution's top priorities externally and internally. This is a unique opportunity to promote, protect, and enhance the values and reputation of one of this country's most highly respected educational institutions, while also advancing Amherst College's position as the defining voice of liberal arts education.



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

The [Office of Communications](#) plays a central role in advancing Amherst College's mission by shaping, stewarding, and expressing the institution's voice. Charged with articulating Amherst's values, priorities, and intellectual contributions, the office ensures that the College communicates with clarity, coherence, and credibility to its audiences internally and externally.

A team of 22 is responsible for the College's core institutional communications across six areas: editorial; social and new media; media communications; digital communications and design services; government relations; and conferences and special events. Through this work, the Office of Communications helps translate the complexity of an academically rigorous, values-driven institution into narratives that are accessible, compelling, and faithful to Amherst's mission.

As the College's official point of contact for the news media, the Office of Communications leads media engagement and issue response, develops proactive outreach strategies, and coordinates official statements and institutional messaging. In moments of heightened visibility or challenge, the office plays a critical role in supporting the President and senior leadership with thoughtful counsel, disciplined execution, and clear communication grounded in institutional values.

Amherst's communications environment is intentionally distributed, reflecting the College's collaborative culture and the distinct needs of divisions such as Admission, Advancement, Student Affairs, and Athletics. Within this context, the Office of Communications serves as the steward of the College's central narrative and visual identity, providing guidance, tools, and standards that support consistency, accessibility, and strategic alignment across campus and shaping all communications that require a unified voice.

— VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

The Vice President for Communications is responsible for how Amherst explains itself to the world and to its own community: who we are; what we value; what we pursue as a community of scholars, students, and citizens; and why Amherst matters. This leader will partner across the College to develop and execute an integrated, proactive communications strategy that builds upon Amherst's identity, influence, and reputation; supports institutional priorities; and strengthens community trust.



Key Opportunities & Responsibilities

The Vice President for Communications serves as the College's chief communications strategist, playing a central role in articulating the College's academic mission, values, and national standing. The vice president closely advises the president and other campus leaders on matters of institutional voice and messaging, provides leadership for reputation management and brand stewardship, and for internal and external communications across the entire College. This role combines high-level strategy with hands-on execution and close collaboration across the campus community.

The Vice President for Communications will lead a centralized communications team of 21 full-time staff and will collaborate with decentralized communicators in divisions across the College in the following areas:

- **Strategic Leadership:** Developing and executing comprehensive communication and marketing strategies aligned with the College's mission and goals
- **Content Strategy:** Ensuring a consistent, compelling institutional voice across all platforms and audiences
- **Media & Public Relations:** Overseeing the College's external narrative and proactively pitching stories
- **Crisis Communications:** Leading communications planning and response for crisis and issue management efforts
- **Collaboration & Management:** Leading the centralized communication team and working cross-functionally with admissions, advancement, and other departments across the College to coordinate a distributed internal communications staff

Strategic Leadership

Ensure that the College speaks with a consistent and trustworthy voice; protects and strengthens its reputation; responds effectively to moments of opportunity and challenge, and communicates complex institutional issues clearly. Ensure the College's communications strategies are forward-looking and adaptive to meet a rapidly evolving communications landscape.

- Develop and steward a cohesive, long-term communications strategy that reflects the College's academic excellence, intellectual ambition, and educational mission.
- Lead communications planning for complex and highly visible institutional messaging for major institutional initiatives, campaigns, milestones, etc. ensuring alignment for greater impact.
- Shape presidential communications, public statements, and key messages.
- Advise the president, senior leadership, and trustees on messaging and issues of public perception and reputational risk.
- Work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students to foster informed engagement with institutional priorities.
- Strengthen internal communications and support transparent, timely, and inclusive communication across the institution.
- Provide strategic foresight and plan proactively to ensure communications strategies remain agile and responsive to shifts in communications practices, platforms, audience expectations, and the broader higher education landscape.

Content Strategy

Enhance the college's brand and reputation across all platforms. Guide editorial standards and oversee the creation and distribution of digital storytelling and print content, including web, social and new media, and Amherst's alumni magazine.

- Elicit, articulate, and advance institutional priorities and accomplishments by closely collaborating with a broad range of stakeholders.
- Support academics-centered storytelling by partnering closely with faculty and academic leadership to communicate the significance of teaching, scholarship, and inquiry.
- Ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and best practices across all platforms.
- Refine communications strategies as informed by analytics.
- Oversee brand identity and visual guidelines.
- Oversee the development of marketing collateral.

Media & Public Relations

Articulate and advance a clear, engaging institutional narrative grounded in the College's academic mission, values, and strategic priorities.

- Oversee the College's external narrative in national, regional, and higher-ed media.
- Cultivate and manage relationships with local, regional, and national media, including with special topics journalists and higher-ed outlets, to support a proactive media relations approach.

- Serve as the College's primary spokesperson and/or prepare senior leaders for media engagement.
- Support engagement with the national conversation on the value and accessibility of a liberal arts education.



Crisis Communications

- Serve on the crisis management team and oversee crisis communications. Develop and execute protocols for rapid response.
- Coordinate messaging during crises (campus incidents, protests, legal matters, national attention, etc.)
- Anticipate reputational risks and prepare proactive response plans.
- Balance institutional credibility and transparency, legal considerations, and sensitivity to the community.



Collaboration & Management

- Lead and mentor a highly skilled centralized communications team responsible for handling digital content including web and design, social and new media, media and public relations, government relations, print publications including the alumni magazine, and conferences and special events. Foster collaboration and professional growth.
- Collaborate closely with senior colleagues who lead divisions including Admission, Advancement/Alumni Relations, and Student Affairs. Steer alignment with decentralized communicators in divisions across the College.
- Steward the College's resources through responsible budget management. Manage budgets, external vendors, and consultants.



QUALIFICATIONS

Amherst's next Vice President for Communications will be an experienced leader with a strategic vision for institutional communications. They will possess exceptional instincts for and a record of creating high-quality integrated communications across broad and varied platforms to articulate Amherst's distinctive attributes and reach a highly diverse audience of alumni, prospective and current students, faculty, and staff.

At a small and highly selective liberal arts college with a national and international profile, this role requires intellectual range and sound judgment as well as sensitivity to and a deep appreciation for institutional values, academic culture, and the distinctive character of residential liberal arts education.

Additionally, the successful candidate will bring:

- Significant senior-level experience in strategic communications, public affairs, or related fields
- Broad experience with strategic communications planning, media/public relations, crisis communications, and new media technologies
- Strong preference for experience in higher education with openness to candidates from other sectors who demonstrate the ability to understand and navigate academic culture
- Strategic thinking and vision, including the capacity to synthesize complex information, anticipate risks and opportunities, and align decisions with institutional priorities and long-term goals
- Demonstrated success advising senior leaders and operating within complex, multi-stakeholder organizations
- Proven ability to implement strategy with accountability, rigor, and measurable outcomes
- Political acuity in a tightly knit campus community/small, relationship-driven institution and a commitment to inclusive engagement
- Demonstrated ability to lead effectively in a collaborative, decentralized decision-making environment, coordinating stakeholders across the institution
- Experience serving as a spokesperson or managing high-level media engagement
- Demonstrated supervisory experience with a track record of mentoring and leading collaborative teams
- Exceptional writing, editing, and narrative development skills
- Sound judgment and discretion
- Demonstrated commitment to equity and inclusion

A bachelor's degree is required; an advanced degree is preferred.

Amherst College invites applications from candidates who may bring a greater depth of experience in some but not all of the functional areas of the portfolio and would be eager to learn more about how such candidates would approach leading the full portfolio.

COMPENSATION

The budgeted salary range for the Vice President position is \$260,000-\$315,000. In addition to annual salary, the College provides employees with generous [benefits](#) including retirement, medical coverage, and tuition.

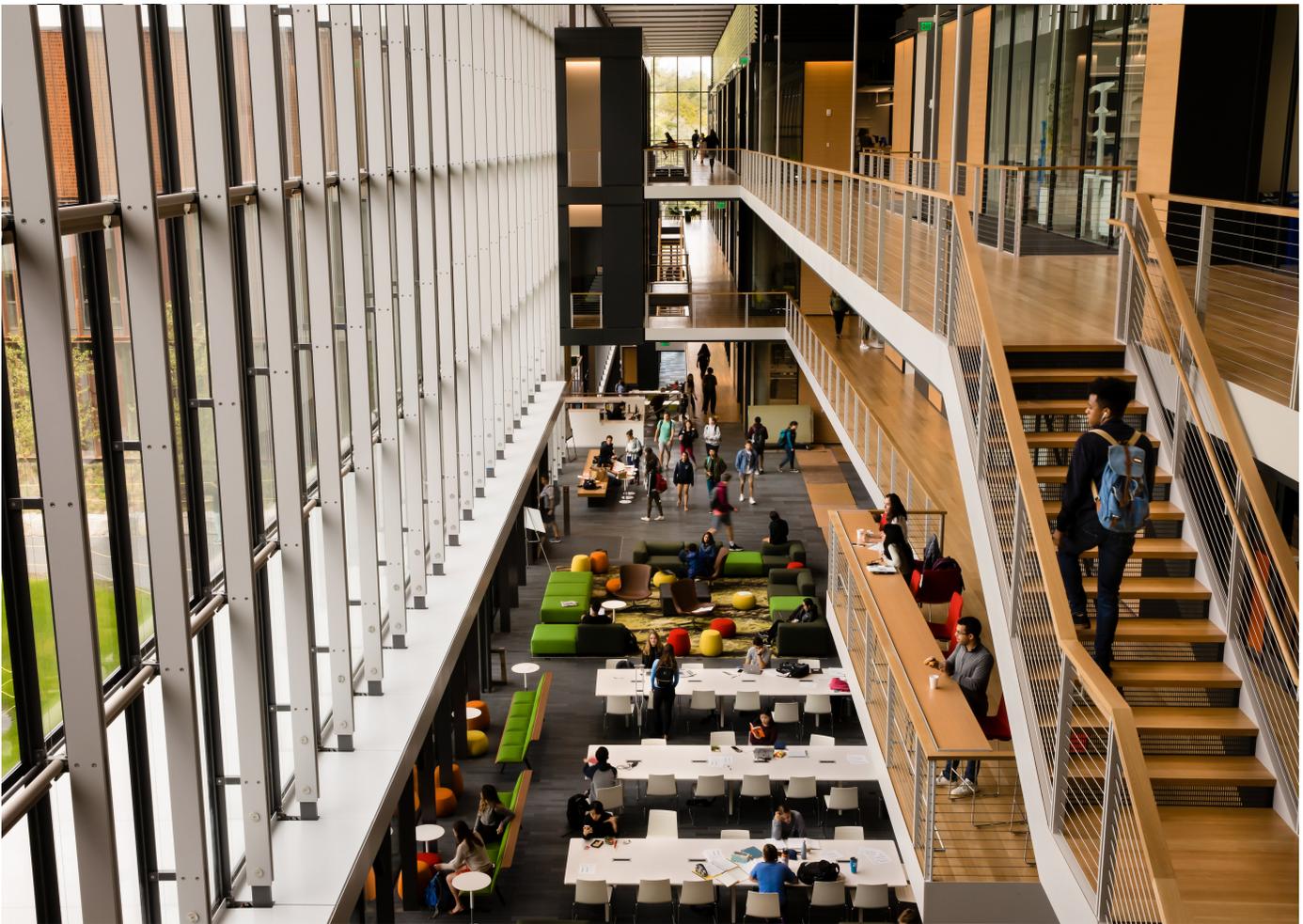
TO APPLY

Amherst College has retained [Opus Partners](#) to support this recruitment. Craig Smith, Senior Partner, and Abigail Maynard, Managing Associate, are leading the search. Confidential inquiries and nominations should be submitted by email to Abigail Maynard at abigail.maynard@opuspartners.net.



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[Opus Partners](#) is an independent executive search firm founded by consultants who have worked together since 1999. Opus conducts senior-level searches nationally and internationally for organizations across the not-for-profit sector. Our clients - universities, colleges, academic medical centers, foundations, and research institutes – advance missions in education, research, patient care, and philanthropy.





Amherst College

Founded in 1821, Amherst College is among the nation's most diverse and selective liberal arts colleges, renowned for its intellectual rigor, close faculty-student engagement, and the enduring contributions of its alumni. Amherst is a true "research-college," where faculty members advance important scholarship in their fields while remaining deeply committed to the institution's bedrock endeavor: the teaching and mentoring of students.

Students are drawn to Amherst's reputation for excellence, its open curriculum, the intimacy of instruction, rich residential life, and the diversity of the student body. The College's leadership is visionary, persuasive, and grounded in both moral imagination and effective management; Amherst's financial aid policies and outreach to international students demonstrates a profound commitment to access and reflects its conviction that the privilege of an Amherst education carries a lifelong obligation to civic responsibility.

[Michael A. Elliott '92](#) is Amherst's 20th president. A champion of liberal arts education and a distinguished scholar of American literature and culture, President Elliott has articulated a vision for Amherst rooted in thinking independently together: a rigorous education that challenges students to pursue curiosity over orthodoxy in a community of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Since returning to the College in 2022, he has championed the intellectual and academic freedom of Amherst's students and faculty and renewed the College's commitment to free expression. These commitments have positioned Amherst as a leading voice in the national conversation about the value of liberal arts education for democratic life.

Amherst is engaged in a [strategic framework planning process](#) to guide the College's future, with emphasis on academic excellence, the residential experience, and thoughtful consideration of institutional growth. The campus community is engaged in the exploration of three key areas:

1. Ensuring that Amherst College's academic mission remains grounded in the educational process that is the essence of the liberal arts
2. Defining the role of the residential experience and its integration into our academic mission
3. Exploring the future of the size and composition of the student body

Located in western Massachusetts, Amherst offers a vibrant cultural and intellectual environment; the College is part of the Five College Consortium, enriching academic and community life.

Amherst College is an equal opportunity employer committed to fostering an inclusive academic community.

Amherst College does not discriminate in admission, employment, or administration of its programs and activities on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex or gender (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity), age, disability, genetic information, military service, or any other characteristic or class protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Amherst College complies with all state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Equal Pay Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.



Amherst College