

University of California Office of the President
Senior Media Relations Officer

The [University of California Office of the President](#) (UCOP) seeks a strategic and experienced communications and media relations professional to serve as its next Senior Media Relations Officer. Reporting to the Senior Director, Strategic and Critical Communications, the Senior Media Relations Officer for the UCOP, the university's systemwide headquarters, is responsible for pitching positive systemwide stories, fielding media inquiries, and developing strategic communications plans and other materials for the University of California (UC) and its senior leaders, including press releases, statements, op-eds, FAQs, talking points, and press briefings.

Strategic and Critical Communications

The Strategic and Critical Communications Department enhances the public's understanding of the University of California and its contributions to the state, the nation, and the world. The department coordinates with the broader [External Relations and Communications](#) (ER&C) and other UC colleagues to design and implement strategies that effectively communicate the University's mission and impact to the news media. This includes engaging with reporters and responding to media inquiries, leading crisis communications, fostering strong relationships with journalists and media outlets, and generating creative and proactive press ideas on behalf of the UC Office of the President.

Senior Media Relations Officer

This key team member will partner closely with ER&C colleagues across marketing, communications, and federal and state government relations, as well as campus media leaders to develop and execute proactive communications strategies that advance university and presidential priorities. The Senior Media Relations Officer will identify high-impact storytelling opportunities, craft and support strategic media outreach, coordinate multimedia assets, and cultivate national, state, and local media engagement to strengthen UC's reputation, reinforce its leadership on critical issues, and highlight the University's impact across California, the nation, and the world. This team member will also help manage emerging issues, develop strategic communications responses to high-profile and sensitive media inquiries, and provide counsel that protects and advances the University's reputation during periods of heightened public attention.

Proactive Pitching and Story Placement

- In consultation with the Strategic and Critical Communications team, works with subject-matter experts at UCOP and other UC locations to identify compelling, high-impact university stories for the news media and develops effective pitches.
- Conducts research, writes, and edits press releases, fact sheets, and other products needed for pitching stories; collaborates with UCOP Communications colleagues to produce social media, creative, and digital strategies and assets as needed to support pitches.
- Secures strong, positive story placements to enhance the public's understanding and appreciation of UC and its contributions throughout the state and nation.
- Tracks and reports on these efforts to senior leadership.

- Collaborates across the External Relations & Communications Division to maximize media opportunities for digital, social media, and advocacy purposes.
- Ensures that proactive media pitching is consistent with overall strategic communications, policy, and messaging goals.

Spokesperson and Strategic Communications

- Develops and executes tactical media strategies and plans, both to support UC's overall activities and to address potentially critical news coverage.
- Acts as an on-the-record UC spokesperson with media.
- Collaborates with subject matter experts to source timely, vetted information and respond to media inquiries.
- Writes and edits plans, media statements, talking points, briefings, and other communications materials for both planned and unexpected situations.
- Plans, executes, and staffs press conferences, press tours, interviews, and other interactions between University representatives and news media, including in person at UC presidential events or at UC Board of Regents meetings as needed.
- Works with Executive Communications colleagues to draft internal communications plans, external statements, op-eds, and other high-profile collateral for senior leaders.
- Prepares senior leaders and other University spokespeople for media opportunities.
- Proactively communicates with UCOP and other UC location colleagues and leadership about media inquiries, coverage, and progress on communications activities.
- Ensures coordinated messaging with other departments in ER&C, other UCOP divisions, and UC campuses.
- Consistently cultivates long-term, positive working relationships with journalists

Qualifications

UCOP seeks a dynamic and highly motivated professional with advanced strategic communications experience and impeccable writing skills who thrives on working on high-profile issues and in a fast-paced environment. The ideal candidate will have demonstrated solid media instincts and a proven track record of cultivating strong relationships with reporters, including managing issues, proactive placement of stories, and pitching institutional leaders and expertise to journalists. Experience working in a large, complex organization is critical.

- Minimum 5 years in deadline-driven journalism or communications role (such as media relations, public affairs, crisis communications, etc.), preferably in a large, complex organization.
- A bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, public policy, or similar relevant field, or equivalent work experience/training.
- Advanced ability to write clear, engaging, compelling, and effective copy appropriate to target audiences, including writing on behalf of senior leaders and complex organizations, with minimal editing and feedback necessary.
- Extensive experience with message strategy creation and implementation, solid traditional and social media instincts, and a proven track record of developing relationships with reporters.

- Demonstrated capacity for creative thinking and synthesis of complex information; able to generate fresh ideas for media outreach approaches that reflect University objectives.
- Collaborative, proactive, nimble, and enjoys rolling up their sleeves and working as part of a small, high-performing team in a fast-paced environment.
- Adept at synthesizing various viewpoints and incorporating constructive feedback into final communications.
- Ability to juggle multiple short-term deadlines alongside long-term projects, combining speed, accuracy, and excellence in everyday performance; demonstrated ability to work independently with minimal supervision to accomplish high-profile tasks and meet concurrent deadlines.
- Exceptional interpersonal and client relationship skills to develop productive partnerships and build consensus. Ego-free, service-oriented approach and experience working with cross-functional teams.
- Have a passion for mission-driven, meaningful work and a familiarity with issues and trends in higher education.
- Demonstrates the highest levels of reliability, trustworthiness, and integrity.
- Excellent analytical and decision-making skills; solid political acumen and problem recognition, avoidance, and resolution skills.
- Experience with digital platforms, including creatively leveraging their reach to achieve strategic communications goals.
- Knowledge of the University of California, its achievements, mission, vision, goals, objectives, programs, policies, and structure (preferred).

The budgeted salary range for Senior Media Relations Officer position is \$132,000-\$150,000. The University of California Office of the President is required to provide a reasonable estimate of the compensation range for this role. This range takes into account the wide range of factors that are considered in making compensation decisions including but not limited to experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, education, licensure and certifications, and other business and organizational needs. It is not typical for an individual to be offered a salary at or near the top of the range for a position. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience. The full salary range shows the growth potential for this position, and the pay scale is the budgeted salary or hourly range that the University reasonably expects to pay for this position. For information on the comprehensive benefits package offered by the University visit: [Benefits of Belonging](#).

The person hired will be required to reside within California and report to work on-site at Office of the President (UCOP) located in Oakland, CA at least two days a week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays ('anchor days').

To Apply

The University of California Office of the President has retained [Opus Partners](#) to support this recruitment. Craig Smith, Managing Partner, and Alyssa Perez, Senior Associate, are leading the search. Confidential inquiries and nominations should be sent by email to alyssa.perez@opuspartners.net.

University of California Office of the President

The [University of California Office of the President](#) is the headquarters of the University of California, one of the largest and most acclaimed institutions of higher learning in the world dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and public service. The UC comprises ten campuses: Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Santa Barbara, which collectively enroll more than 290,000 students. In addition to the three national laboratories, the UC operates six academic health systems.

Together, the UC System's institutions employ more than 240,000 faculty and staff and are supported by more than two million living alumni working around the world. Over half a million people annually benefit from UC continuing education courses, as well as from the services and discoveries of UC-affiliated research centers and educational programs operating throughout the state. In 2023 UC generated about \$82 billion in economic activity in California and contributed about \$55.8 billion to the gross state product.

Two major features in the historical development of the University of California distinguish it from other major public research universities in the U.S. The first is the University's unusual status as a constitutionally designated public trust—a designation shared by only five other major public universities. Governed by a 26-member Board, UC is designated as the State's primary academic research institution and provides undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. UC is given nearly exclusive jurisdiction in California-wide public higher education for doctoral degrees and for instruction in law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine, positioning it as the State's public research University. The second point of distinction is the University of California's tradition of shared governance: the concept that faculty should share in the responsibility for guiding the operation and management of the University, while preserving the authority of the University's governing board, the Regents, to ultimately set policy. This tradition of shared governance is also deeply held by students and staff across the system. For more information, visit [UC Mission](#).

Conditions of Employment

Background Check Process: Successful completion of a background check is required for this critical position. [Background check process at UCOP](#)

Smoke Free Work Environment: The University of California, Office of the President, is smoke & tobacco-free as of January 1, 2014. [UC Smoke & Tobacco Free Policy](#)

As a condition of employment, you will be required to comply with the University of California [Policy on Vaccination Programs](#), as may be amended or revised from time to time. Federal, state, or local public health directives may impose additional requirements.

As a condition of employment, the finalist will be required to disclose if they are subject to any final administrative or judicial decisions within the last seven years determining that they committed any misconduct, are currently being investigated for misconduct, left a position during an investigation for alleged misconduct, or have filed an appeal with a previous employer.

- “Misconduct” means any violation of the policies or laws governing conduct at the applicant's previous place of employment, including, but not limited to, violations of

policies or laws prohibiting sexual harassment, sexual assault, or other forms of harassment, discrimination, dishonesty, or unethical conduct, as defined by the employer.

- [UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [UC Anti-Discrimination Policy for Employees, Students and Third Parties](#)
- [APM - 035: Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination in Employment](#)

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The University of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected status under state or federal law.

The University of California, Office of the President, strives to make this job board accessible to any and all users. If you have comments regarding the accessibility of our website or need assistance completing the application process, please contact us at: [Accessibility](#) or email the Human Resource Department at: epost@ucop.edu.