



Senior Public Affairs Officer

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

Representing the collective interests of Ontario's publicly-assisted universities, COU (www.cou.ca) promotes higher education in Ontario through research and policy development, advocacy and communications.

The Senior Public Affairs Officer works closely with the Director, Government and Stakeholder Relations and the Manager, 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 Public Affairs Officer works closely with COU colleagues on strategic communications, as well as government and stakeholder relations strategies including taking a leading role in issues and crisis management.

Responsibilities:

Government Relations

- Provides advice and executes COU's government relations advocacy strategy and project manages COU's pre-budget government relations strategies and other submissions as appropriate
- Develops written and oral submissions to government, including pre-budget submissions, responses to consultations, and presentations
- 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 Director and other colleagues and helps ensure organizational priorities, work plans, and strategies reflect the context of government priorities and political realities
- Working with the Director of Government Relations and other colleagues, assists with cultivating effective relationships with government officials, both political and civil service, and stakeholders, identifying emerging issues and opportunities

Communications

- Identifies and assists in the development and implementation of a strategic multi-channel Public Affairs plan 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, and other written communications
- 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 logistical coordination, advance preparation of communication materials and onsite support
- Uses a variety of analytics tools to measure and grow audiences

- 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 Manager, Communications and other colleagues in a timely manner

Issues Management and Media Relations

- Is able to effectively identify issues, as they arise, and takes the government relations lead on the issues management group to ensure that COU is able to respond and brief members (as needed) in a timely manner.
- Provides strategic advice to the Senior Management Team on appropriate responses.
- Supports the Manager, Communications with requests for information and media enquiries
- Writes, edits and distributes effective media releases, key messages and issue notes, as well as online media contributions and events plans.
- Collect and maintain data for media relations database, maintain contact lists and generate reports

Stakeholder Relations

- Builds relationships with communications and government relations advisors, media and university stakeholders, and suppliers to further COU goals
- Maintains ongoing contact and dialogue with colleagues in member institutions to learn about priorities, seek advice, and share information and intelligence
- Provide 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 political science, public administration, communications, or another relevant field. Graduate degree is an asset.

Skills:

- At least eight years of professional experience, with several years in a communications role and a background in successful advocacy and issues management
- Strong political acumen and issues sensitivity. Political campaign experience an asset
- Ability to think strategically to identify opportunities for communications campaigns to advance the advocacy agenda
- Ability to work with graphic designers in the creation of marketing material and online products
- Ability to monitor announcements and news and identify potential impacts for the sector
- Strong understanding of media landscape, and how to win earned media
- 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
- Adept at writing simply and persuasively
- Superior interpersonal skills to work internally as an advisor on public affairs as well externally building a broad network of relationships
- Knowledge of or experience in the Ontario university sector is an asset
- A strong network of government, media 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 COURecruit@cou.ca by 5 p.m. on Monday March 25, 2019.

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.