



The Opportunity

The Vice-President (External Relations) develops and leads strategies and initiatives that strengthen the University of Alberta's reputation and deepen its relationships with the public, government, key partners, and communities, while advancing the university's fundraising and development priorities. The portfolio fosters understanding and engagement through government and community relations, storytelling, advocacy, community partnerships, and signature events, working in close collaboration with academic faculties and administrative units. The Vice-President also serves as a senior ambassador for the university, building and sustaining relationships with key partners and communities, including government, donors, alumni, deans, community members, faculty, staff, and students across the university's five campuses.

The University of Alberta is committed to being a university that is admired, trusted, and respected by those it serves—in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world.

Reporting directly to the President, the VP External Relations (ER) at the University of Alberta advances and enhances the institution's reputation, brand awareness, and value proposition. This is achieved by clearly communicating the University's role in its community to external stakeholders (locally, nationally, and internationally) and supporting internal stakeholders with initiatives and actions that will elevate the University's overall status. The VP ER also has a close relationship with the President, serving as a trusted advisor and providing strategic counsel on any issues that may arise. This role requires being continually on crisis alert and proactively identifying potential challenges that could pose a reputational risk to the institution.

The significant overlap among key partners and communities demands a fully integrated external relations strategy that moves beyond communication to genuine engagement: helping partners and communities understand how the University of Alberta is linked with their lives, culture, and society.

Leading a total team of approximately 300, the Vice-President (External Relations) portfolio encompasses a vibrant and diverse team of strategic institutional areas:

Relationship Building

Builds and maintains trusting relationships and partnerships with a broad range of interest holders, including Indigenous communities. Builds and maintains trusting relationships and partnerships with a broad range of interest holders, as well as municipal, provincial, federal, and Indigenous governments. Utilizes accessible and realistic communications that navigate the



needs and priorities of a broad range of audiences, advancing shared priorities and strengthening the university's role as a trusted partner.

Government Relations

Builds and maintains trusted relationships and partnerships with municipal, provincial, federal and Indigenous governments, and coordinates institutional interface with all orders of government. Possesses a deep understanding of the government's needs so that the University can be responsive and in a strong position to influence when needed.

Trusted Advisor

Acts as an advisor to the President on all matters related to the University's Brand and Reputation (both internally and externally). They enable the President to be a strong public figure by equipping them with the information that is required to effectively manage crises and de-escalate situations

Issues Management

Expertly navigates both anticipated and unanticipated challenges that arise on a daily basis in order to minimize risks to the University. They prioritize their efforts, as well as those of the team, based on limited funding and resources.

Marketing and Strategic Communications.

Shepherds the university's brand by leading institutional strategic communications through external media to build awareness and reputation. Increases understanding and engagement among the university's internal and external communities.

Advancement

Provides vision and leadership to a full-scale institutional advancement program, including the development and execution of programs that produce measurable results for the University, including major gift and planned giving, corporate and foundation giving, donor relations, research, gift processing and other fundraising support.

Alumni Relations

Creates and maintains successful programs to develop and cultivate lasting relationships with the university's local, national and international alumni population.

Key Accountabilities

Reporting to the President, the Vice-President (External Relations) is a key member of the senior leadership team and is responsible for advancing the University of Alberta's reputation, relationships, and philanthropic success. Operating under the authority of the Board of Governors in accordance with the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the Vice-President provides

strategic leadership across communications, marketing, government relations, engagement with key partners and communities, and advancement.

Strategic Leadership & Advisory

The Vice-President serves as a principal advisor to the President on matters relating to institutional reputation, public positioning, and external engagement. As a member of the President's Executive Committee, the role contributes to the development and execution of institutional strategy, ensuring alignment between external relations priorities and the university's academic mission and strategic plan (Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact). The Vice-President champions a culture of collaboration, performance, and innovation across the portfolio.

Reputation, Communications & External Engagement

The Vice-President provides integrated leadership of the university's communications, marketing, branding, government relations, and community engagement functions. The Vice-President is responsible for ensuring a clear, consistent, and compelling institutional voice that enhances global reputation and supports strategic objectives.

The role builds and sustains senior-level relationships with government, industry, and community partners, positioning the university as a trusted and influential contributor to public policy, research, and societal impact. The Vice-President also oversees issues management and crisis communications, safeguarding the institution's reputation in a complex and dynamic environment and protecting the advancements made toward achieving the university's long-term strategic goals.

Government & Strategic Relationships

The Vice-President leads a sophisticated government relations strategy, advancing key policy, funding, and advocacy priorities at the provincial, national, and international levels. The role strengthens strategic partnerships and fosters meaningful engagement with external partners to enhance the university's profile, impact, long-term strategic goals and support.

Advancement & Alumni Relations

The Vice-President provides strategic oversight of a comprehensive advancement program. This includes driving philanthropic growth, cultivating transformational donor relationships, and strengthening alumni engagement globally.

The Vice-President collaborates with academic and administrative leaders to align advancement priorities with the university's strategic goals, ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach to fundraising, alumni engagement, and institutional partnerships. Through transformational philanthropy and meaningful engagement with donors, alumni, Indigenous communities, and other key partners, the Vice-President strengthens the University's reputation, visibility, and



long-term impact while fostering a culture of stewardship that inspires enduring support and trust.

Qualifications & Education Requirements

The successful candidate will possess a combination of education, executive leadership experience, and demonstrated accomplishments that have prepared them to lead a complex, multi-faceted organization at the highest level. A graduate degree in a relevant discipline (e.g. Business Administration, Communications/Public Relations, Public Policy, etc.) is considered an asset.

They will be a strategic thinker with significant accomplishments across communications, marketing, government relations, advancement, and alumni relations and will demonstrate the ability to engage people inside and outside the university in collaborative efforts that advance the University of Alberta's strategic plans.

The Vice-President will be an accomplished relationship-builder and communicator, with excellent delegation skills and the capacity to mentor and lead a strong, cohesive team of professionals focused on common goals and objectives. They will have a proven track record of success in a complex organization with a diverse workforce, as well as the ability to develop proactive partnerships and work effectively across all levels of the organization. Superior leadership, people management, coaching, and mentoring skills will be essential, particularly within a collaborative environment characterized by decentralized decision-making within a coordinated services model.

The successful candidate will also bring evidence of innovation, fresh thinking, and creative approaches to addressing challenges, including sophisticated problem-solving abilities and the capacity to present and recommend multiple solutions. Demonstrated understanding of the importance of practices to ensure access, foster community connections, and increase belonging.

Personal Characteristics

Experienced Leader

Proven track record of success in leadership roles, with the ability to articulate a clear vision, inspire teams, and cultivate a collaborative and innovative culture. Known for promoting creative thinking and driving high performance through engagement and accountability.

Relationship Building

Skilled in developing and sustaining strategic relationships and networks that advance organizational priorities. Proactively identifies partnership opportunities and creates forums to build alliances, fostering long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations.

Clear, Collaborative Communication

Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to influence and engage diverse communities. Builds strong, productive relationships and works collaboratively across teams, always prioritizing outcomes that benefit the organization as a whole.

Strategic and Visionary Thinking

A forward-thinking leader who can define a compelling vision and translate it into actionable strategies. Adept at communicating complex ideas in clear, relatable terms to inspire alignment, commitment, and results.

Analysis and Problem-Solving

Analytical and pragmatic, with a disciplined approach to evaluating information from multiple sources. Conducts thorough research, exercises sound judgment, and develops effective solutions to complex challenges.

Integrity and Trust

Recognized as a trustworthy and principled professional who communicates with honesty and discretion. Handles sensitive information with care and provides candid, constructive insights in a respectful and appropriate manner.

Creativity

Brings energy, curiosity, and innovation to every initiative. Continuously seeks new ways to improve processes and outcomes, leveraging fresh perspectives to drive meaningful results.