



Search for the Chief Operating Officer for Communications and Marketing
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN

POSITION SUMMARY

Vanderbilt University seeks a strategic and collaborative systems leader with experience managing through growth and change to serve as the Chief Operating Officer for Communications and Marketing. This person will support the success of the university-wide communications and marketing function, ensuring that clear and efficient systems, processes, staffing, and technology are in place to deliver excellence every day and result in a best-in-class division that is a consistent source of innovation and leadership in communications and marketing across the university.

Vanderbilt is in an exciting period of transformation as the institution lives its motto, *Crescere aude*: "Dare to grow" in bold new ways. This innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, accompanied by a commitment to [radical collaboration](#), is also core to the culture of the communications and marketing team. The COO will be a key partner to the Vice Chancellor for Communications and Marketing, tasked with identifying and implementing needed improvements to systems, processes, and technology to deliver excellent quality and to build the visibility and reputation of the communications and marketing function as a valued partner.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, has been retained to support the search committee in this effort. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications as noted at the end of this document.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING AT VANDERBILT

Imagine a world illuminated by groundbreaking discoveries and transformative education, where the pursuit of knowledge is revered and the voices and achievements of an extraordinary community are elevated, amplifying the impact of their noble endeavors. In this world, a strong sense of belonging and the belief of what's possible drives innovative partnerships and remarkable results. At the heart of this dynamic ecosystem, driving innovative solutions to global challenges from pandemics to cybersecurity, stands Vanderbilt University. Within its Communications and Marketing division, the university's commitment to shaping societal leaders and enhancing the mission of a prestigious, 150-year-old institution is vividly demonstrated.

THE ROLE

The Chief Operating Officer for Communications and Marketing holds a pivotal executive role, directly reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Communications and Marketing. This position is instrumental in steering the operational strategy, management, and execution of the division's activities. The COO's leadership will ensure that the division not only meets but exceeds its goals by enhancing operational efficiencies, deploying measurable, innovative strategies, and fostering an environment that values excellence and collaboration above all else.

The COO will join at a pivotal moment of growth and evolution, as the Communications and Marketing team focuses on streamlining processes and growing the capacity of the team to deliver with both efficiency and excellence. The COO will oversee a team across the Communications and Marketing division's key operational functions, including Business administration, Project Management, and Data and Analytics. The COO will also be responsible for the effective use of resources, including a budget of \$20M and a headcount of 115. This position offers a unique opportunity to drive significant impact at one of the world's leading research universities, ensuring that the Communications and Marketing division reflects the prestige and high standards of Vanderbilt University.

Responsibilities and Priorities

- ***Direct, enhance and continuously improve the operations of the Communications and Marketing division, aligning strategic initiatives with the university's overarching goals.***

The COO will ensure that the division has the operational structures and team to achieve its aspirations. This individual will improve on or implement the internal systems and processes necessary to support a modern, world-class communications and marketing function that is nimble and has the ability to respond to emerging opportunities. This includes spearheading the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and methodologies in communications and marketing to stay ahead of industry trends.

- ***Utilize data analytics and insights to inform and adjust strategies, products, and services.***

The COO will ensure that systems are in place to support data-driven decision-making, optimizing communications and marketing efforts so that they are responsive to changing dynamics and highly effective in supporting the university's success.

- ***Enhance and maintain an innovation capability to ensure continuous improvements and adoption of the latest strategies, technologies and approaches.***

The "capacity to build new capabilities" is core to the success of the Communications and Marketing team. The COO will be an experienced facilitator of innovation, able to identify key opportunities and needs, and move nimbly to implementation. This includes the ability to put in place processes that support a multi-faceted team through change.

- ***Develop and execute a strategic roadmap that supports the university's key priorities, ensuring optimal performance and accountability at all levels.***

The COO will lead a team of senior communications and marketing professionals, promoting a culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and professional development. They will oversee the division's budget, strategically allocating resources to maximize impact and efficiency, and will regularly evaluate team performance and adjust strategies as necessary.

- ***Maintain robust relationships with all university stakeholders, including leadership, faculty, and external partners, to enhance the university's public profile and strategic positioning.***

Implement and manage successful internal communications and relationship-building efforts, keeping key partners informed of important activities and milestones, and building the visibility of the communications and marketing division as a trusted partner.

- ***Proactively manage risks by anticipating potential issues and implementing timely solutions***

As a key partner to the Vice Chancellor, the COO will be attuned to key strategic concerns from a communications lens and will play a proactive role in managing risks to uphold the university's values and minimize reputational impact.

- ***Champion Vanderbilt's values of belonging, self-direction, collaboration, and growth.***

The COO will appreciate Vanderbilt's collaborative spirit and will demonstrate active listening, open communication, transparency, clarity, and equity in their leadership. They will play a key role in advancing smooth and steady organizational culture and change management efforts, and engaging team members in the evolution of organizational culture.

Qualifications

- A minimum of 10 years of experience in global operations management, with a range of cross-industry experience from higher education to corporate sectors.
- Proven track record of leading successful change management initiatives and managing senior-level teams in a dynamic environment.
- Strategic project management and program management capability as part of standardizing approaches and increasing efficiency and effectiveness.
- Experience with communications or marketing, particularly within high-stakes or high-profile contexts, is highly preferred.
- Experience managing substantial budgets (preferably over \$10 million) and making strategic financial decisions.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and implement operational strategies that align with organizational goals.
- Demonstrated track record of effectiveness in managing high-performing teams
- A strong commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace that promotes and values diversity.
- A Bachelor's degree is required.

Additional Requirements

Candidates must be willing to work in-person at the Vanderbilt University campus in Nashville, TN and should be open to relocating to the area within six months of hire if not already local. This position will require flexibility to work outside regular business hours as needed to meet job responsibilities.

All candidates selected for an offer of employment are subject to pre-employment background checks, based on the role for which they have been selected. These may include but are not limited to: criminal history, education verification, social media review, motor vehicle records, credit history, and professional license verification.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/vanderbilt-university/chief-operating-officer-communications-and-marketing>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Katie Rockman, Partner
Nella Young, Senior Associate
Maria Connor, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

At Vanderbilt University, we are intentional about and assume accountability for fostering advancement and respect for equity, diversity, and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff. Our commitment to diversity makes us who we are. We have created a community that celebrates differences and lets individuality thrive. As part of this commitment, we actively value diversity in our workplace and learning environments as we seek to take advantage of the rich backgrounds and abilities of everyone. The diverse voices of Vanderbilt represent an invaluable resource for the University in its efforts to fulfill its mission and strive to be an example of excellence in higher education.

Vanderbilt University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. Women, minorities, people with disabilities, and protected veterans are encouraged to apply.

APPENDIX

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Vanderbilt University, located in Nashville, Tennessee, is one of the top research universities in the nation. Created from an initial \$1 million gift from Cornelius Vanderbilt, who envisioned a place that would "contribute to strengthening the ties that should exist between all sections of our common country," the University is situated on a 330-acre campus near the thriving city center. Vanderbilt employs almost 7,000 faculty and staff and serves more than 13,000 students across ten schools and colleges.

Vanderbilt offers undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and science, education and human development, engineering, and music, as well as a full range of graduate and professional degrees. Its strength in the liberal arts—combined with nationally recognized programs in business, creative writing, divinity, education, engineering, law, medicine, music, and nursing—prepares its graduates for lives of impact, discovery, creativity, and service. Over the last 15 years, Vanderbilt has achieved an astonishing record of success in recruiting the very best students, with the undergraduate admit rate going from 33 percent to 6.2 percent. Vanderbilt continues to expand its reach globally, pursuing bold proposals to advance scholarship, reputation, and impact, deepen student experience, and recruit on a global scale.

To be at Vanderbilt is to live, learn, and work in a generative and inclusive environment. Instilling a deep sense of belonging is a core value at the institution. The University's leadership is committed to pursuing new and innovative approaches and investing resources to strengthen belonging for everyone at the institution. Identity, equity, diversity, and inclusion are priorities across the campus.

The University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees. Vanderbilt is a member of the Association of American Universities.

NASHVILLE

As the hub for several booming industries, the home to a global community – including the nation's largest Kurdish population – and "America's friendliest city," according to *Travel + Leisure* magazine, Nashville combines history and hospitality with diverse culture and growth.

Tennessee's capital is also an international destination for the arts, entrepreneurship, and scientific research, thereby attracting world-renowned scholars to Vanderbilt and the broader community. In turn, it's no surprise that many students, families, and professionals choose to call Music City home.

Home to more than 100 stand-alone parks and a quick drive away from the Great Smoky Mountains, Nashville offers many opportunities for enjoying the great outdoors. In addition to the nearby greenways, scenic hiking routes, and historic riverfront, the Vanderbilt campus is itself a top outdoor attraction. An

accredited arboretum, the university campus has more than 6,000 trees and shrubs, including nearly 200 different species.

Nashville has been named one of the 15 best U.S. cities for work and family by *Fortune* magazine, was ranked as the #1 most popular U.S. city for corporate relocations by *Expansion Management* magazine, and was named by *Forbes* magazine as one of the 25 cities most likely to have the country's highest job growth over the coming five years.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Daniel Diermeier is the ninth chancellor of Vanderbilt University. He joined Vanderbilt in 2020 after serving as Provost at the University of Chicago and, before that, dean of the Harris School of Public Policy at Chicago. Earlier in his career, he was on the faculty of Stanford and Northwestern universities.

An internationally renowned scholar of political science and managerial leadership, Diermeier has launched several ambitious initiatives at Vanderbilt, including [Destination Vanderbilt](#), a bold commitment to recruit and hire stellar faculty at an increased rate, and [The Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy](#), which seeks to elevate evidence-based reasoning in the national conversation. During his tenure, the university also launched [Vandy United](#), a \$300 million fundraising campaign focused on Vanderbilt student-athletes, athletics programs, and Commodore fans, the largest undertaking of its kind in the university's history.

A first-generation college graduate, Diermeier earned a PhD in political science from the University of Rochester. He also holds master's degrees in political science from the University of Rochester and the University of Munich and a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Southern California. In 2013, he was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as a political scientist and game theorist.

C. Cybele Raver serves as the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Vanderbilt University. An esteemed developmental psychologist whose leadership has spanned research, academic, and administrative settings, Raver oversees all faculty, staff, programs, and initiatives for Vanderbilt's ten schools and colleges. Raver is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and is the Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Psychology and Human Development at Peabody College.

Before her tenure at Vanderbilt, she was deputy provost at New York University. She has held faculty positions at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy and Cornell University's Department of Human Development. Throughout her career, she has received prestigious awards from the American Psychological Association and the William T. Grant Foundation and has been granted support from the MacArthur Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation, in which she garnered more than \$24 million in funding.