



Vice President for University Communications and Marketing
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Baltimore, Maryland

THE SEARCH

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) seeks an experienced and strategic leader to serve as its inaugural Vice President for University Communications and Marketing (VP). Committed to inclusive excellence in practice and values, UMBC is proud to be one of the nation's fastest-growing and most diverse public top-tier universities. The University's vibrant campus is regarded as a new model for American higher education – a place where talented students, faculty, and staff thrive in a culture that embraces and encourages innovative ideas and collaboration.

As the University builds on its remarkable momentum in recent years, the Vice President for Communications and Marketing will help sustain and strengthen the University's standing among the nation's leading institutions and advance the strategic goals of the institution. This position presents a compelling opportunity to play a key role in shaping communications and marketing strategies in support of the next era in UMBC's dynamic trajectory. The VP will also be responsible for advising the President and leading the University more broadly through crisis communications situations. Previously embedded within the UMBC Office for Institutional Advancement, a new division of University Communications and Marketing has been created, elevating this strategic function and creating a VP role as a direct report to the President and key member of her senior leadership team. The VP will lead and influence all communications and marketing efforts across the University and will serve as the principal advisor to the President on all communications-related matters.

Working closely with President Valerie Sheares Ashby, fellow members of the senior leadership team, students, staff, faculty, and alumni, the VP will develop and implement a comprehensive, modern marketing and communications program capable of meeting the University's ambitious objectives and further enhancing the University's national and international reputation and resources. The executive will lead a centralized staff of approximately 30 talented communications and marketing professionals and partner with others within the University's schools, departments, programs, and divisions. This is an exciting opportunity for a strategic leader to define and build an innovative and ambitious approach to communications and marketing that advances messaging for UMBC as a whole by reaching each of the University's distinct audiences through tailored, effective, and impactful approaches.

The ideal candidate will have substantial experience developing and implementing multi-faceted communications and marketing efforts that position and elevate the perception of an entire organization with multiple audiences, preferably in a higher-education context. This person will have keen strategic and planning skills, a thorough understanding of traditional, modern, and emerging methods, techniques, and channels, and a comprehensive understanding of communications and marketing processes from creative conception through fulfillment. Demonstrable leadership and managerial skills and institutional savvy are key, as are a collaborative and collegial nature, emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, and a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). The VP must be able to bring many constituents to the table, understand their various concerns and priorities, and craft strategies and programs that address multiple needs. The successful candidate will be intellectually curious and committed to active engagement on campus and in local communities.

UMBC has engaged the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, in this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence, as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY

Founded in 1966, UMBC is a mid-sized public research university in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and a member of the University System of Maryland (USM). It was the first public university in Maryland to include students of all races, and it is federally designated as a Minority Serving Institution. UMBC was established upon the land of the Piscataway and Susquehannock peoples, and, over time, citizens of many more Indigenous nations came to reside in the region. UMBC humbly offers its respects to all past, present, and future Indigenous people connected to this place.

In the 2021 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, UMBC ascended to the highest level of research activity, achieving the Research 1 (R1) categorization for doctoral institutions. The University delivers a distinctive undergraduate educational experience characterized by a strong liberal arts and sciences core and offers graduate programs in engineering, information technology, science, humanities, social sciences, public policy, and human services. UMBC's Graduate School offers 41 master's degree programs, 24 doctoral degree programs, and 24 graduate certificate programs. The Division of Professional Studies offers an array of professionally focused master's degrees, graduate certificates, individual courses, and non-degree training programs.

Thirty-five new academic programs have been added since 2006, including three new departments: gender, women's, and sexuality studies; media and communication studies; and marine biotechnology. Most of the University's academic programs are offered on its 500-acre main campus near Baltimore, with some programs offered at the Universities at Shady Grove campus – a distinctive partnership of nine USM institutions – in Rockville, Maryland, and select research and teaching facilities in downtown Baltimore.

The campus is largely residential, the University enrolls almost 14,000 students, and it enjoys more than \$118 million in externally funded research annually. UMBC has increased its international student population, more than doubled the proportion of students from low-income households, and more than doubled its number of annual graduates – from 1,700 to nearly 3,500 over the past 20 years.

Founded in 1966, UMBC has achieved a remarkable national and international reputation for innovation and student success, particularly in STEM. It has modeled for the world what it means to practice inclusive excellence – most notably through its Meyerhoff Scholars Program, which has been replicated at numerous institutions throughout higher education since its inception in 1988. UMBC consistently ranks among the most innovative universities and of the highest quality undergraduate teaching. For over a decade, The Chronicle of Higher Education has recognized UMBC as a “great college to work for.”

UMBC ranks among the U.S.’s top 100 public universities in federal research support, #14 in NASA funding, and #40 in federal funding for social sciences. In 2020, UMBC was honored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with its distinguished Carnegie Community Engagement classification. Significantly, UMBC is the nation’s #1 producer of Black undergraduates who go on to complete a PhD in the natural sciences or engineering and #1 for Black undergraduates who complete an MD/PhD.

For more information about the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, please see umbc.edu.

THE UMBC COMMUNITY

UMBC’s Vision Statement is remarkable in its clarity and ambition: “Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.” UMBC serves 14,148 total students: 10,490 undergraduates and 3,658 graduates. Most students (94 percent of undergraduates and 44 percent of graduates) come from the state of Maryland, the majority coming from Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties, as well as the City of Baltimore. As of Fall 2023, 18 percent of undergraduate and graduate students were international, and over 100 countries are represented in the entire student body.

The University is firmly committed to access and is a diverse and welcoming community, with just over fifty percent of students self-identifying as students of color. As of Fall 2023, across undergraduate and graduate students, the University enrolled a student body comprising 28 percent White students, 20 percent Black/African American students, 19 percent Asian American students, 8 percent Hispanic/Latinx students, and 18 percent international students. Fifty-four percent of students self-identify as men and 46 percent as women, a trend that has held relatively stable over the past 20 years.

UMBC's 1185 faculty are recognized nationally and internationally, notably in the areas of research, scholarship, and creative achievement. In FY 2023, UMBC faculty submitted proposals for over \$400 million in extramural funding and secured more than \$140 million in new extramural awards, and campus-wide annual extramural research expenditures reached an all-time record of \$110 million in FY 2023, including \$89 million from federal funding sources. The rich and rigorous environment for teaching and learning is supported by approximately 560 full-time instructional faculty members, of which 425 hold the ranks of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. Of those tenured or on the tenure track, approximately 49 percent self-identify as women, 6 percent as Black or African American, 5 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 18 percent as Asian.

Essential to all University activities and initiatives are the employees who tirelessly support and advance the institution's mission and enhance the student experience at UMBC. The University employs approximately 1,291 staff members in a variety of non-faculty roles. As of 2023, 60 percent of UMBC staff self-identify as women, 20 percent as Black or African American, 3 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 5 percent as Asian, 0.08 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.2 percent as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

UMBC embraces a strong shared-governance model, in which academic success is facilitated by fostering an empowering institutional culture and broad leadership for innovation among senior leaders, administrators, staff, faculty, and students. The University Steering Committee, comprising the leaders of the University's three senates, the Graduate Student Association and the Student Government Association, is the cornerstone of UMBC's shared governance system. The strong shared governance model at UMBC is a key element of its empowerment. To learn more about each of the groups, please visit <https://usc.umbc.edu/>.

PRESIDENT VALERIE SHEARES ASHBY

Valerie Sheares Ashby was appointed to the presidency of UMBC on August 1, 2022. She is the first woman to serve in this role.

Dr. Sheares Ashby previously served as dean of Duke University's Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. In this role since 2015, she led a 700-person faculty spanning nearly 40 departments and programs in rethinking what it means to deliver a world-class liberal arts education while navigating a pandemic and consistently promoting diversity and inclusion as a means of achieving excellence in both teaching and research.

Dr. Sheares Ashby came to Duke from UNC, where she served on the faculty since 2003 and chaired the chemistry department from 2012 to 2015. In her role as department chair, she was instrumental in UNC's collaboration with UMBC to launch the Chancellor's Science Scholars Program, among the earliest Meyerhoff Scholars replication pilots at an R1 institution. She began her academic career at Iowa State University as an assistant professor in 1996 and was promoted to associate professor in 2002. While at

Iowa State, Dr. Sheares Ashby was a mentor for the Iowa State University Program for Women in Science & Engineering, a summer research program for undergraduate and high school students.

As a researcher, Dr. Sheares Ashby has focused on synthetic polymer chemistry with an emphasis on designing and synthesizing materials for biomedical applications such as X-ray contrast agents and drug delivery materials. She is the recipient of the National Science Foundation Career Development Award, DuPont Young Faculty Award, and 3M Young Faculty Award, as well as numerous teaching awards.

She received her BA and PhD degrees in chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and completed postdoctoral research at Universitat Mainz in Germany as a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow and NATO Postdoctoral Fellow. A full bio on President Sheares Ashby can be found at umbc.edu/leadership/president/.

ABOUT THE DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Previously housed within the Office for Institutional Advancement, the newly formed division of University Communications and Marketing has the opportunity to advance its role on campus as a strategic, collaborative partner across the university. Within the division, there are three distinct yet highly integrated departments: Strategic Content, Brand and Creative Strategy, and Marketing. As they work to advance the priorities of the university and help build UMBC's reputation and visibility, members of each of these departments are engaged in assisting every facet of the University in telling its story to external constituents and internal audiences alike.

The diverse, collegial, and dedicated members of the UCM team lead and manage wide-ranging communications and marketing efforts for the university. Among the team's areas of expertise and scope of responsibility are the University's flagship print publication, [UMBC Magazine](#); social media; digital strategy, including web development and content strategy; university-wide storytelling and local, national, and international media relations; brand expression and creative strategy, including design and production, photography, and videography; and strategic marketing, including, but not limited to, efforts to build UMBC's brand visibility and perception and to achieve the university's strategic enrollment goals at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. UCM manages internal communications, advises and supports the president and other senior leaders on messaging and communications strategy, and is a key partner in emergency management, leading crisis communications for the University. UCM has been led by an external interim VP following the division's establishment in early 2023, and that interim leader has collaborated with the president and UCM staff to build a strong foundation and optimal structure for the division, as well as to enhance productive relationships between UCM and its many campus partners.

VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

UMBC seeks a leader with an established record of success in communications, marketing, positioning, and outreach; a proven ability as a trusted and valuable advisor to institutional leadership and senior colleagues; a deep commitment to access, affordability, and inclusion; and a deep appreciation for the mission of public higher education, combined with a thorough understanding of its challenges and opportunities. The leader who will succeed at UMBC is highly collaborative and skilled in data-informed best practices in all forms of internal and external communications.

Joining UMBC early in President Sheares Ashby's tenure and following a strategic administrative restructuring and establishment of University Communications and Marketing, the new VP will join the President's senior leadership team at an opportune moment to play a key role in the development and support of the University's strategic priorities while simultaneously building a cohesive and collaborative division to advance those priorities.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

The new Vice President of University Communications and Marketing will:

Provide vision and direction for the newly established University Communications and Marketing division to elevate UMBC's brand regionally, nationally, and globally.

The Vice President will develop and carry out a comprehensive, strategic communications and marketing plan for the university that amplifies the University's strengths and distinctiveness and works specifically to advance UMBC's strategic aims. The new VP will take advantage of the new administrative structure to define a best-in-class division that is modern, innovative, and both proactive and responsive, incorporating traditional and modern channels. This leader will also assess opportunities for growth and drive innovation in marketing and communications at the University, endeavoring to elevate UMBC's reputation while building and fostering relationships with a wide array of constituents and external audiences. As the chief marketing officer for UMBC, the Vice President will leverage UMBC's marketing and communications resources to strengthen and sustain the University's brand identity. Working in partnership with colleagues across the University, this leader will be responsible for amplifying the institution's mission and distinctive value while identifying factors that could negatively impact its reputation and implementing strategies to prevent, manage, and mitigate these issues.

Engage in mission-centered collaboration and relationship building with a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

To succeed in this work, the new VP must develop a comprehensive understanding and deep appreciation for UMBC's mission, culture, and voice. An inspiring and empathic individual of unquestioned integrity, ethics, and values, this leader will have a demonstrated record of supporting and driving initiatives to advance DEIB. Employing consultative and data-informed approaches, the VP will evaluate the effectiveness of communications and marketing tactics with many internal and external audiences on an ongoing basis, seeking input and feedback from colleagues and leaders who bring a diverse array of perspectives and developing communication strategies that engage all audiences in support of an inclusive University community.

The VP will convene, support, and inspire collaboration and coordination among communications and marketing professionals across the University, building strong, collaborative, and collegial relationships with all unit-based communications and marketing professionals, understanding their specific priorities and how those priorities connect to institutional priorities. The VP will also ensure that University Communications and Marketing provides appropriate levels of consultation and support to those individuals and teams.

Serve as a trusted senior member of the President's senior leadership team.

Partnering with the president in her role as chief spokesperson for the University, this leader will serve as a co-strategist on messaging, help to refine the presidential voice and co-create with the president a strategic leadership communications plan, inclusive of writings, speeches, public appearances, and media relations. The VP will also be tasked with keeping the president abreast of current events and news in higher education, both locally and nationally. The VP will likewise provide guidance and support to other senior leaders across the University, building upon existing collaborations with vice presidents, deans, and faculty, and will work closely with the University System of Maryland in support of their keen understanding of the importance of sophisticated best practices in communications and marketing. This person will also occasionally collaborate with the USM communications lead and colleagues at other USM schools on USM-centered messaging or campaigns. It will be critical for the VP to develop strong, collaborative, and mutually supportive partnerships with leaders in Enrollment Management, Advancement, Student Affairs, and Athletics, identifying and building consensus on areas of strategic focus and ensuring that they are well served with communications and marketing efforts that advance their goals and that as leaders they are able to communicate with their audiences in ways that are engaging and effective.

A critical component of this role is providing University-wide leadership for and expertise in crisis management planning, including reviewing, updating, and establishing crisis communications policies and procedures; proactively identifying and formulating responses to potential issues; and offering real-time crisis communications management, counsel, and support.

Provide strong leadership and management for University Communications and Marketing.

Maintaining an open and engaged leadership style that empowers staff through active communication and delegation, the VP will set a clear direction and priorities for a team of approximately 30. The VP will inspire and motivate the staff, promote its excellence through well-defined and measurable goals, and support the continued professional development of individuals and the evolution of the team. The VP will serve as a mentor and will provide staff with appropriate professional development opportunities, encouraging staff to work toward individual and team growth and development targets.

Cultivating an environment that rewards new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence, maintains accountability, and encourages teamwork and collaboration, this leader will celebrate achievements, set clear expectations for future success, and create and contribute to a work environment of openness, inclusion, and mutual respect. The VP will foster excellence in collaboration with institutional partners, ensuring that the staff members of this newly formed division are perceived as strategic partners whose leadership, expertise, and problem-solving are sought after and valued across the University. The VP will strengthen collaboration and coordination with distributed communications and marketing units and staff throughout the institution, ensuring efficiency of effort, asserting the strategic importance of a coherent and comprehensive approach to communications and marketing, and assisting divisions, units, and schools in the development of communications and marketing plans in support of their goals.

EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND QUALIFICATIONS

While no one individual can possess every desired quality and skill for this position, the UMBC community aims to attract a professional with exceptional skills in strategic communications and marketing, the highest levels of integrity and empathy, the ability to work collaboratively with a group of senior executives and academic leaders, the ability to navigate ambiguity, and a deep commitment to the University's mission and values. The ideal candidate will bring many of the following professional qualities and experiences:

- At least 10 years of progressively responsible experience leading, developing, and implementing a successful communications and marketing program across a complex enterprise with multiple constituencies and a wide variety of audiences.
- Exceptional track record of change management, leading teams, and stakeholders through both influence and direct authority.
- Significant experience developing and implementing effective media and public relations strategies to enhance institutional reach and reputation among national media, philanthropic partners, employers, government officials, and the general public.

- Deep experience evaluating the strengths of existing communications and marketing programs and identifying opportunities for improvement, using data-informed processes to assess and monitor effectiveness.
- Experience developing and implementing an effective institutional crisis communications plan.
- Demonstrated ability to develop strategic budgets and steward financial resources effectively
- A deep understanding of higher education (and related public policy) issues and challenges; an ability to facilitate the general public's understanding of these issues.
- Emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, and awareness; a demonstrated ability to communicate with nuance and foresight. Demonstrated experience with and a commitment to engaging and listening to diverse constituencies and audiences.
- Ability to advise institutional leaders on positioning, points of institutional quality, and areas for improvement, given trends and issues in post-secondary education.
- Impeccable judgment and discretion in managing highly sensitive and confidential information.
- A strong commitment to personal and professional development and the ability to build, lead, mentor, motivate, and retain high-performing, diverse professional teams to create a robust and collaborative communications and marketing ecosystem.
- Demonstrated commitment, knowledge, and proven results in establishing best practices to advance DEIB; a nuanced understanding of the critical role of communications and marketing in advancing an institution's DEIB goals and commitments.
- Exceptional clarity of thought and ability to communicate clearly and compellingly, orally and in writing; exceptional editing and presentation skills, as well as listening ability.
- Strong data acumen, skill in quantitative analysis, and ability to use data to understand issues deeply and develop effective strategies.
- Experience with communications related to Division I athletics is a plus.
- Impeccable integrity, excellent judgment, and commitment to transparency; embodiment of the highest standards of professionalism and quality.
- Significant intellectual acumen and wide-ranging intellectual curiosity, ability to learn quickly, creativity in, and passion for conveying powerful and engaging messages about the institution.
- Deep commitment to collaboration and collegiality; the ability to combine best practices and business sensibilities with authenticity and respect for others.
- Forthrightness combined with tact and diplomacy; ability to handle challenging questions with empathy and grace and to mediate when needed. A sense of humor and an even-keeled temperament, especially under pressure and in terms of crisis.
- Ability to garner respect as an institutional and opinion leader and to lead at all organizational levels.

- Interest in learning and cultivating appreciation and respect for the University's distinctive culture and traditions. Serve as an excellent ambassador for the University and engage effectively with alumni, donors, parents, and external audiences on behalf of the institution.
- Bachelor's degree is required.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-maryland-baltimore-county/vice-president-university-communications-and>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Partner
Alexis Ditaway, Associate
Isaacson, Miller

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, values safety, cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility, lifelong learning, equity, and civic engagement. Consistent with these principles, the UMBC does not discriminate in offering equal access to its educational programs and activities or with respect to employment terms and conditions on the basis of a UMBC community member's race, creed, color, religion, sex, gender, pregnancy, ancestry, age, gender identity or expression, national origin, veterans status, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or genetic information.