



Executive Director of Issues Management
University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

THE SEARCH

The University of California, Los Angeles ([UCLA](#)), and its Office of Strategic Communications ([StratComm](#)), seek a strategic, proactive, and collaborative leader to serve as the next Executive Director of Issues Management.

This is an extraordinary moment to join UCLA and StratComm. The university recently welcomed its seventh chancellor, [Dr. Julio Frenk](#), a visionary leader in global health and higher education. In his June 2025 [inaugural address](#), Chancellor Frenk called on UCLA to rise to today's most pressing challenges and to embrace its role as a force for connection, progress, and public trust.

He outlined a bold and values-driven vision for UCLA to be a connective, impactful, and exemplary public institution. "Great universities bridge divides," he said, affirming UCLA's unique ability to bring people together, translate knowledge into solutions, and inspire a stronger society.

The Executive Director of Issues Management will play a meaningful role in realizing this vision. This position is central to how the university prepares for, responds to, and communicates around complex issues that shape UCLA's reputation and relationships. It is an opportunity to lead with integrity, protect what matters most, and help define how a great university shows up when clarity, courage, and care are most needed.

Reporting to the [Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications](#), the Executive Director serves as a senior advisor and institutional strategist. This individual partners with academic and administrative leaders across campus to anticipate and address a wide range of reputational challenges, from emerging concerns to sensitive ongoing issues.

The Executive Director provides clear counsel to senior leadership, oversees real-time response and risk analysis, and uses media and storytelling to reflect UCLA's mission, values, and excellence. Leading a focused team, this individual will guide the university's strategy for issues management, crisis response, and long-term reputation building.

The ideal candidate is a forward-thinking communicator who thrives in high-stakes environments and leads with transparency and collaboration. They bring at least ten years of experience in senior communications roles within complex institutions, along with a record of success in issues and crisis management. A deep understanding of audience engagement, messaging, and organizational trust is essential. Higher education experience is not required. A bachelor's degree is required.

UCLA has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

UCLA is one of the world's top public research universities, recognized for its academic excellence, global reach, and deep ties to Los Angeles. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and downtown LA, the university benefits from — and contributes to — one of the most diverse, creative, and innovative cities in the world. Ranked the No. 1 [public university](#) and No. 15 overall by *U.S. News & World Report*, UCLA offers exceptional breadth and depth across disciplines — from the arts and humanities to science, health care, and public service. Its more than 5,400 faculty members teach and mentor approximately [33,000 undergraduates and 13,000 graduate students](#) through the College of Letters and Science and 12 professional schools.

UCLA is a hub of discovery and impact, shaping solutions to challenges facing California, the nation, and the world. Since becoming part of the University of California system in 1919, UCLA has remained committed to expanding access, driving progress, and serving the public good.

Leadership and UCLA's Strategic Plan

Chancellor Julio Frenk joined UCLA in January 2025, bringing a distinguished record of leadership in global health and higher education. In his [inaugural address](#), he laid out a bold and values-driven vision for UCLA to deepen its role as a public institution that not only generates knowledge but also connects people, strengthens communities, and fosters trust.

This is a moment of great opportunity for higher education. At UCLA, that opportunity is being met with optimism, resolve, and action. The university is investing in its people, its partnerships, and its ability to make a meaningful difference in the world.

[Creating the Future](#), UCLA's five-year strategic plan, reflects this momentum. Its [five goals](#)—from expanding global engagement and elevating research and teaching to becoming a more effective institution—reinforce UCLA's commitment to local impact, global reach, and academic and operational excellence.

Together, Chancellor Frenk's vision and the university's strategic plan provide a clear and energizing platform for leadership. They call on the UCLA community to work collaboratively, communicate with clarity and purpose, and help shape a future that reflects the very best of what public higher education can achieve.

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

UCLA Strategic Communications ([StratComm](#)) brings the university's mission and values to life through bold, inclusive, and impactful storytelling. As UCLA's lead communicators, the team reflects the diversity of the campus and surrounding communities while inspiring awareness, trust, and pride in the institution.

StratComm spans a range of focus including brand marketing, media relations, executive communications, social media, issues management, and analytics. The department includes more than 100 communications professionals who work together to deepen understanding of UCLA's vision, amplify its impact, and build meaningful connections with audiences across campus and around the world.

Mary Osako, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications

[Mary Osako](#), BA '96, is UCLA's inaugural vice chancellor for strategic communications. Since September 2019, she has overseen communications and media relations, brand marketing, and insights, and helps maintain and enhance UCLA's reputation as a world-class public research university.

Previously, Osako served as chief communications officer of Activision Blizzard; head of global corporate communications at Amazon; and vice president of corporate, international and public policy communications at Yahoo! Immediately prior to joining UCLA, she was a partner and chief operating officer at Haven Tower Group, a leading strategic communications and marketing firm based in Santa Monica that serves corporate clients across the country, where she currently serves as vice chair of the firm's board of advisors.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ISSUES MANAGEMENT

The Executive Director of Issues Management (ED) helps UCLA respond to challenging moments with clarity, care, and credibility. Reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications, the ED supports the university's ability to communicate quickly and thoughtfully when sensitive issues arise. This work reinforces public trust and strengthens UCLA's relationships with its many communities.

This role requires a steady hand, sound judgment, and strong collaboration across campus. The ED works closely with the Vice Chancellor and campus partners to anticipate emerging concerns, guide response strategies, and ensure messaging reflects UCLA's values and mission. In key moments, the ED may also represent the Vice Chancellor in high-level meetings or communications.

Leading a focused team of four professionals, the ED helps shape and manage the university's response to issues that may affect UCLA's reputation or community. Key responsibilities include:

Strategic Communications & Issues Management

- Lead the development and execution of proactive communication strategies to address emerging issues and crises that may affect UCLA's reputation or operations.
- Collaborate with the Vice Chancellor, executive leadership, and cross-functional teams across the university to shape messaging that supports institutional priorities and reinforces public trust.
- Provide strategic counsel to academic and administrative units on managing sensitive communications and de-escalating potentially volatile situations.
- Assist the Vice Chancellor in preparing high-level communications on complex issues, including messages sent from the Chancellor and Executive Vice Chancellor to internal and external audiences.

Media Relations & Public Engagement

- Serve as a responsive and trustworthy university representative in interactions with media, elected officials, and community leaders.
- Manage incoming media inquiries and public records requests in coordination with campus leadership, ensuring accuracy, timeliness, and alignment with UCLA's values and best interests.
- Develop content and messaging targeted to national and global audiences that elevate UCLA's accomplishments, expertise, and contributions; oversee distribution across earned and owned media platforms.

Crisis Response & Operational Coordination

- Coordinate institutional responses during active events on campus, including safety-related incidents or reputational flashpoints.
- Ensure seamless alignment and communication with key offices, including the president, provost, campus safety, and general counsel.
- Lead response procedures, staffing, and communications logistics in real time, adapting strategies as events unfold.
- Partner with external agency collaborators to support communications efforts as needed.

Monitoring, Insight & Preparedness

- Monitor news coverage, current events, and real-time social and digital media activity to anticipate potential risks and inform decision-making.
- Provide leadership support in developing timely, transparent, and informative content that keeps internal and external stakeholders informed about significant developments or issues affecting the university.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This is an exceptional opportunity for a strategic and proactive communications professional to join one of the nation's preeminent public research universities during a time of new leadership and renewed commitment to its values and mission. Qualified candidates will have ten or more years of communications experience serving as trusted counsel to presidents, CEOs, and senior-most executives in complex organizations, ideally on a global footing. Prior experience in higher education is not required.

The executive director will bring many of the following professional qualities and experiences:

- Proven experience in a senior communication role, preferably within a complex organization, with a focus on issues, reputation, and crisis management.
- Political acumen and institutional savvy sufficient to recognize issues early in their development as well as in the moment; establish credibility and garner trust with high-level leadership (academic and administrative) to identify how best to address those issues; and understand the complexity of the university's audiences and the channels through which they consume information about UCLA.
- Track record of developing and implementing successful, dynamic communication strategies that are nimble and adaptable during times of change or crisis.
- Ability to synthesize complex or incomplete information and then mobilize partners and resources across the university and system to address issues.
- Strong intellectual curiosity, a drive to learn, and a desire to find complete answers or explore new dimensions of a challenge.
- Demonstrated strong leadership skills and the ability to collaborate effectively across diverse teams and stakeholders.
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, with an eye for strategic thinking and innovative problem-solving.

- Sophisticated understanding of communication channels, technologies, and best practices for leveraging owned and earned media.
- Inclusive and facilitative leadership style that inspires and empowers staff, fosters innovation, and encourages open communication and collaboration.
- Experience working in environments with many internal clients and external constituents, with a demonstrated ability to navigate complexity and collaborate constructively.
- Ability and desire to thrive in a fast-paced, high-impact environment, managing multiple priorities while maintaining a focus on long-term objectives.
- A strong strategic orientation, commitment to excellence, and attention to detail, with the ability to handle sensitive information with discretion and sound judgment.
- A bachelor's degree is required.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

Los Angeles is the epicenter for the global entertainment industry and one of the major economic centers of the State of California, which boasts one of the largest economies in the world. Los Angeles County has the largest population of any county in the United States and is one of the most populous metropolitan areas in the world. Its nearly 10 million residents represent more than 140 cultures and speak an estimated 224 languages. Home to one of the largest city parks in the country, countless hiking trails, and some of the nation's most renowned museums, Los Angeles is internationally recognized as one of the most livable cities in the world. Learn more at www.discoverlosangeles.com.

The anticipated salary range for this position is \$190,000–\$210,000 and is commensurate with experience.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

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/ucla/executive-director-issues-management>

Elizabeth Neustaedter, Principal
Christina Garrison, Senior Associate
Ryan Cheung, Senior Search Coordinator

The University of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer advancing inclusive excellence. 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 categories covered by the UC nondiscrimination policy.