



Chief Operating Officer  
University Musical Society  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

## THE SEARCH

University Musical Society (UMS) seeks a strategic and collaborative leader to serve as the organization's inaugural Chief Operating Officer (COO). The COO will sit at the heart of a vibrant cultural institution with a legacy of over 145 years of artistic excellence and innovation. This role offers the chance for a mission-driven leader with a passion for the arts and operational excellence to build and lead strategies that support world-class performances, community engagement, and educational programming.

In partnership with the President and peers on the senior leadership team, the COO will influence UMS's daily operations, build more robust and efficient cross-departmental collaboration, and support the President in translating strategy into actionable goals for performance and growth. UMS employs approximately 33 full-time staff, has an annual operating budget of \$11-12M, and is a closely affiliated University of Michigan partner. The role will be instrumental in shaping one of the nation's most esteemed performing arts organizations by ensuring that clear and efficient systems, processes, staffing, and coordination are in place. Furthermore, the COO will play a critical role in both the ongoing refinement and implementation of the organization's 150th vision and strategic plan, and in the potential UMS building project. This will enable the organization to grow and seize new opportunities while continuing to deliver excellence every day and remain a consistent leader in the performing arts and cultural sector locally and nationally.

## ABOUT UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

Housed within the intellectually rich campus of the University of Michigan and the culturally dynamic city of Ann Arbor, UMS is one of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, committed to connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. Now in its 147th season, UMS continues to showcase traditional performing arts alongside contemporary artists and is admired across the country for its boundary-pushing roster of artists and its curious and supportive audiences.

With a program rich in music, dance, and theater, UMS contributes to a vibrant cultural community by [presenting](#) approximately 60-75 performances and over 100 free [educational](#) activities each season. UMS also commissions new work, sponsors artist and company residencies, and organizes collaborative projects with local, national, and international partners. As an independent nonprofit affiliated with the University, UMS works in particularly close partnership with the School of Music, Theatre & Dance (SMTD), as well as many other academic units at U-M; UMS sells tickets for the SMTD and currently rents performance and event [venues](#) that the University and SMTD operate.

UMS is led by a dynamic [leadership team](#) comprising the President, Vice President of Finance and Administration, Vice President and Chief Development Officer, Vice President of Learning and Engagement, Vice President of Marketing and Communications, and Vice President of Programming and Production. A 32-member Board of Directors also champions UMS's work.

## ROLE OF THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

This newly created and pivotal role is designed to help drive and implement the organization's [strategic priorities](#). The COO will play a critical role in the ongoing refinement and implementation of the organization's 150th vision and strategic plan, and will oversee and direct internal operational, administrative, and planning functions and policies on a wide range of institutional goals. The COO will work closely with the President, VPs, and other leadership staff to support each department's goals and strategies, while serving as an essential liaison with constituencies at U-M and in the community.

The COO will provide direct oversight of the following key areas for the organization, and the VPs or leaders of each of these areas will report directly to the COO:

- Finance & Administration: Includes Accounting, Business Systems, Information Technology, and Facilities.
- Human Resources: Includes benefits, compensation, recruitment, learning and development, culture, and performance management.
- Marketing & Communications: Includes Marketing and Media Relations, Sales, Patron Services, and Front of House.
- Learning & Engagement: Includes programming for faculty and students, K-12, community, and audience initiatives.

The COO will meet regularly with the President and weekly with VP leaders of all areas, in addition to regular Leadership Group meetings. The COO will be included, along with the President, in UMS's Core Programming Group, which meets nearly weekly throughout the year to advance and assess the full range of UMS programming opportunities. The COO will be responsible for ensuring the effective use of resources across UMS operations, with an [operating budget](#) of \$11-12M and a team of 33. The COO will report directly to the President and will play an integral role in facilitating collaboration across the UMS senior leadership team and the full staff. Additionally, the COO will occasionally represent the President and UMS in public settings, assist in the stewardship of the UMS board and other key councils and

constituents, the donor community, and, in coordination with the President, the University's leadership and the U-M Arts Initiative. In this inaugural role, the COO will address the following opportunities and challenges, continuing to shape the role to meet UMS's needs and priorities.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

### Oversee the day-to-day operations of UMS

- Manage day-to-day facilities and operations, HR, and other organizational needs, coordinating across functions to enable comprehensive solutions across UMS and in coordination with the University of Michigan.
- In partnership and coordination with the President's office, help ensure UMS maintains robust relationships with all University stakeholders, including leadership, faculty, and external partners, to enhance UMS's public profile and strategic positioning.
- Take a leadership role in developing and sustaining external partnerships and key strategic relationships with regional, national, and international collaborators.
- Ensure UMS delivers on its public mission and brand promise, always keeping UMS audiences, internal stakeholders, and the broader community at the center of our efforts and considerations.

### Oversee implementation of 150th Vision and Strategic Plan

- Define key goals, milestones, and success metrics; Provide leadership and input for all strategic plan implementation processes with the President and staff colleagues.
- Develop and implement a system for tracking and reporting on the progress of executing the strategic plan, and be prepared to report regularly to the President and UMS Board.

### Increase capacity for effective cross-collaboration across all UMS functions and the University

- Ensure that UMS has operational structures and processes to achieve its aspirations; Work with the leadership team to ensure that the calendar, resources, planning, and budget are aligned, and season planning and priorities of individual departments are coordinated.
- Improve or implement systems to ensure that UMS is nimble and able to respond to emerging opportunities and/or address organizational challenges.
- Bring an intentional approach to team building and foster a results-oriented, accountable, and agile environment for all staff.

### Provide strategic partnership and facilitate special projects

- As a key partner to the President and senior leadership team, be attuned to key strategic concerns and proactively manage risks by anticipating potential issues and implementing timely solutions.
- Work with the VP of Finance and Administration and unit heads to provide strategic thought partnership on financial and operational decisions; monitor and ensure budgets are achieved to meet approved financial goals, ensuring effective, efficient use of limited resources and that UMS has the administrative employees, spaces, technology, and best possible conditions for success.

- Collaborate with the President, the VP of Marketing and Communications, the VP of Programming and Production, and the VP of Learning and Engagement to achieve the UMS mission and vision, better informing coordinated decisions and resource allocation.
- Act as a key partner with the President's office in managing plans and priorities for the development of a possible new building and home for UMS.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This is a newly created and pivotal role at UMS, intended to help knit the organization together in setting and implementing strategies for the future. This is an excellent opportunity for individuals with significant strategic and operations management experience in a performing arts context to help lead a proven organization that continues to perform at very high levels while pursuing new and aspirational goals.

Successful candidates will demonstrate the capacity for a strong partnership with the President, and a highly collaborative mindset with a high-performance VP and management team. Specific requirements include:

- **Proven excellence in organizational management:** Skillful as a collaborator and advisor, capable of leading senior staff to develop high-performance teams and implement strategies. Analytic and clear-sighted decision maker with the ability to prioritize, communicate, and build consensus.
- **Experienced facilitator of innovation:** Able to identify key opportunities and needs, leverage strengths across program areas, and move nimbly to implementation. This includes the ability to put in place processes that support a multi-faceted team through change.
- **Ability to build internal and external relationships:** Effective at ensuring all stakeholders feel valued and essential to the organization's success. Ability to navigate complex internal or institutional dynamics within UMS and the University of Michigan.
- **Proficiency with finance and administrative oversight:** Significant experience in budgeting, fiscal management, and driving strategic decisions in the context of financial realities. Familiarity with developing and/or overseeing digital strategies, technologies, and applications.
- **Appreciation for UMS's collaborative spirit:** Equipped to 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. Demonstrated active listening, open communication, transparency, clarity, and equity in their leadership. Passion, humility, integrity, with a positive, mission-driven, and self-directed mindset.
- **Track record of successfully navigating a new building project or renovation is desired:** Experience with the operational and logistical issues specific to building projects.
- **Education and experience in performing arts:** Minimum Bachelor's degree (or higher) with at least 5-10 years of practical experience and/or an extended record in program management.

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The COO is a senior, full-time, exempt role at UMS, with a likely salary range of \$200-220K per annum, based on experience and qualifications. A full benefits package will be offered, consistent with the UMS team and U-M employees, and per University of Michigan benefits guidelines. Paid leave policy includes 4 weeks of annual paid vacation, plus holidays and the University of Michigan “season days”. Retirement contributions to a 403b are matched 2:1 by UMS and the University.

Candidates must be willing to work in person on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor and should be open to relocating to the area if not already local. This position will require flexibility to work outside regular business hours as needed to meet job responsibilities.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, has been retained to support the search. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-michigan-university-musical-society/chief-operating-officer>.

Ben Tobin, Nella Young, and Alaine Small  
Isaacson, Miller

*University Musical Society is committed to developing staff  
who thrive and contribute to a positive and inclusive environment.  
For more information on UMS, visit [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org).*