



Associate Vice President, Marketing and Communications
California State University, Monterey Bay
Marina, California

THE SEARCH

[California State University, Monterey Bay](#) (Cal State Monterey Bay), a top-ranked comprehensive regional university, seeks a strategic and deeply experienced associate vice president for marketing and communications (AVP) to develop, shape, and amplify the university's visibility and reputation platform as it enters an exciting period of impact.

Reporting to and partnering with the vice president for university advancement and executive director of the CSUMB Foundation (VP), Michael LaPlante, the AVP will play a critical role in helping the university frame and convey its commitment to academic excellence, unique strengths as one of the most residential schools in the California State University system, and role as an engine of upward social mobility in California's Central Coast. This is an exceptional opportunity to join VP LaPlante early in his tenure and craft a bold vision for an integrated marketing and communications program during a transformative moment marked by the unveiling of its [Making Waves, Transforming Futures](#) strategic plan, a [new brand campaign](#), and preparation for the public launch of the university's second comprehensive campaign.

The AVP is a reimagined role at Cal State Monterey Bay that recognizes the need for a proactive, strategic, and modern approach to marketing, communications, and messaging for internal and external audiences alike. As a key member of the president's extended cabinet, the AVP will work in close partnership with senior leaders and constituents across the university to develop and execute coordinated multi-channel strategies that elevate Cal State Monterey Bay's new brand, momentum, and distinctiveness by bringing the university's untold stories to life through compelling, research-informed messaging that resonates with diverse audiences locally, regionally, and nationally. Leading a talented team of 10, the AVP will focus on collaboration, alignment, innovation, and continuous improvement, ensuring cohesive and consistent communication internally and externally that strengthens the brand, deepens engagement, and positions Cal State Monterey Bay for continued growth and impact—including through partnership with colleagues in enrollment marketing and external partners in media relations. The AVP will also serve as an advisor and counsel to campus administrators on navigating matters related to external relations and issues management.

The next AVP will bring a comprehensive command of the marketing and communications enterprise from strategic vision to execution and fluency across traditional, digital, and emerging media platforms, ideally within a higher education environment. The successful candidate will have a strong data-oriented approach and proven success leading and developing high-performing teams and cultivating a collaborative, accountable culture that breaks down silos and increases efficiencies. The AVP will articulate and advance an integrated marketing and communications vision aligned with university priorities across academic affairs, advancement, enrollment management, student affairs, and athletics to strengthen Cal State Monterey Bay's visibility, positioning, and momentum while inspiring internal partners to engage productively. A collegial leadership style, political acumen, and adaptability are essential. The successful candidate will possess an appreciation for Cal State Monterey Bay's mission and be committed to active engagement in the campus and local communities. A bachelor's degree and at least five years of progressive leadership are required; an advanced degree is preferred.

Cal State Monterey Bay has retained Rachel Ellenport of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Reporting to the vice president for university advancement and executive director of the CSUMB Foundation (VP) and serving as a member of the president's extended cabinet, the AVP is the university's chief marketing and communications officer, providing leadership and management of all communications and marketing strategy, execution, and evaluation to build awareness of Cal State Monterey Bay and its impact on the lives of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the region. The AVP will deliver strategic vision and direction in the creation and implementation of a comprehensive, innovative, and integrated marketing and communications program that highlights the university's strengths and fosters relationships with key constituents (e.g., prospective students and families, current students, senior administrators, faculty and staff, alumni, donors, and foundation board members) and external constituents and audiences (e.g., traditional news and digital media outlets; local community members and leaders).

The AVP will supervise a team of 10 staff with responsibility for marketing strategy, content development (editorial, design, photography/videography), project management and production, and communications platforms, including institutional website and digital projects, alumni communications, newsletters, social media accounts, media relations, and public relations. Collaborating with all divisions on campus, the AVP will refine the university's overarching positioning in authentic ways, address Cal State Monterey Bay's current achievements and recognize its potential, and establish nuanced messages that target key constituencies and expand institutional visibility and reach.

Following are the responsibilities and duties of the role:

- Support the vice president for university advancement in his role as the university's chief development officer and executive director of the CSUMB Foundation, serving as advisor and co-strategist on messaging.
- Offer guidance and support to the extended cabinet and campus administrators and other community members (deans, faculty, staff, alumni, students, and volunteers) to understand their priorities and translate academic, research, and service accomplishments into compelling brand-aligned communications that meet strategic communications, and goals.
- Partner closely with the President's Office Communications Officer to ensure that the president is well briefed and that their engagement in communications-related activities is highly productive.
- Lead, manage, and mentor a creative team in the development and execution of an inclusive, integrated communications and marketing program including, but not limited to, digital and web content development, publications, advertising, social media, and public and media relations. Manage projects and workflow, calibrating resources as necessary.
- Build an effective, data-informed strategic communications and marketing strategy. Conduct and direct research necessary to craft message development. Evaluate the effectiveness and success of communication vehicles with different internal and external audiences on an ongoing basis.
- Convene, support, and inspire collaboration with all executive and divisional leaders to ensure that University Communications is seen as a responsive and accountable shared services partner. Facilitate coordination and alignment among senior administrators and their communications staff to adopt a One University narrative and harmonize annual priorities for seamless delivery and coherent reception.
- Establish a digital ecosystem that reflects the university's brand, creates a cohesive strategy across platforms, recognizes the breadth and divergent needs of campus units, and emphasizes compliance with accessibility and user experience standards.
- Set clear direction and priorities for a team of professional support personnel. Continually assess staff strengths, hire new team members as needed, encourage professional development opportunities, and maintain a high-quality, diverse team.
- Partner closely with Enrollment Management & Student Affairs (EMSA) to align institutional brand strategy, creative direction, and messaging architecture in support of enrollment goals, while EMSA retains responsibility for enrollment marketing strategy, recruitment operations, and yield tactics.

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- Coordinate crisis management planning and response, including establishing crisis communication policies, in collaboration with University Police Emergency Operations. Provide messaging and talking points for contact officers and others related to emerging issues and communications needs.
 - Supervise budgets, allocate fundraising personnel and financial resources; track and forecast expenditures against approved budgets.
 - Under the direction of the VP, participate in external community programs and activities to foster positive attitudes about Cal State Monterey Bay within the community and across the CSU system.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

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

- A deep appreciation for the history, achievements, and aspirations of Cal State Monterey Bay, its powerful upward mobility mission, unique qualities, and regional presence.
- Minimum of five years of experience envisioning, developing, and implementing an integrated strategic marketing and communications program, ideally in higher education, that was successfully leveraged across an enterprise with multiple constituencies and a wide variety of audiences.
- Knowledge of the strategies and industry best practices for all aspects of marketing, communications, positioning, and messaging, including sophisticated and creative use of brand content, social media, analytics, and other forms of digital communications in conveying information and content in ways that engage and excite constituents. Familiarity with Salesforce, Terminalfour, and Pathify are a plus.
- Substantial experience evaluating the strengths of existing marketing and communications programs and identifying opportunities for improvement. Ability to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the communications process without sacrificing quality and impact. An aptitude for using data and metrics in decision-making and evaluating the success of programs and campaigns.
- Demonstrated ability to craft substantive and cohesive messages based on an institution's history and strategic goals, communicate them successfully to key audiences, and adapt and adjust appropriately over time.
- Broad experience in strategic communications, digital, social, and print communications, media relations, and crisis management, as well as successful experience dealing with local, state, and national media.

- Keen creative and design sensibilities, with a strong understanding of the marketing and communications process from creative concept through production and fulfillment.
- Engaging and persuasive written and oral communications skills, and a clear ability to serve as a professional and trusted representative of the university. A solid executive presence and commitment to the highest standards of professionalism.
- Experience working in an environment serving competing priorities and multiple internal partners and external constituents, often with a shared responsibility for communications.
- Collaborative and collegial orientation, eager and able to engage a diverse base of partners and build strong professional relationships, serving as a resource to others and obtaining their input. Exceptional diplomacy, discretion, and judgment, as well as political savvy.
- Record of creative and entrepreneurial management; the ability to build, lead, mentor, and motivate staff; and the ability to encourage change and growth in both people and programs. A commitment to personal and professional development, and the ability to build a strong, autonomous, and collaborative team.
- An orientation for operational efficiency and optimal use of resources; deep understanding of budgets and proven success managing them.
- A desire to deeply engage in the local and university communities; keen understanding of the role diversity and intercultural understanding play in achieving excellence.
- Bachelor's degree required.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

Located along the central coast of California, Monterey Bay is a vibrant and dynamic community that offers a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural attractions. With miles of stunning coastline along the Pacific Ocean, rolling hills, and lush forests, this area offers residents a peaceful and relaxing environment for recreation. Monterey Bay offers an interlude from the hustle and bustle of city life within driving distance from major cities such as San Francisco and San Jose, and makes it easy to explore everything California has to offer, including endless opportunities for hiking, surfing, beachcombing, and more. Close to the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row, the local community enjoys access to art, farmers' markets, and festivals at their fingertips.

The anticipated compensation range for this role is **\$180,000-\$200,000**. In addition to the salary range listed herein, Cal State Monterey Bay offers a wealth of benefits to make working at the university even more rewarding. These benefits may include comprehensive health insurance, sick and vacation time,

retirement savings plans, and access to a number of perks. Please refer to the link listed [here](#) to learn more about Cal State Monterey Bay's compensation practices and benefits. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience; the budget for the position; and in support of fair, equitable, and consistent pay practices at California State University, Monterey Bay.

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/california-state-university-monterey-bay/assistant-vice-president-development>

Rachel Ellenport, Partner
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Cal State Monterey Bay is an Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action employer seeking to recruit and support a broadly diverse community of faculty and staff. We value and celebrate diversity in all its forms and strive to foster an inclusive culture built on respect that affirms inter-group relations and builds cohesion. We consider qualified applicants for employment for their anticipated contributions and without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, medical condition, pregnancy, marital status, veteran status, or disability.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by California State University, Monterey Bay. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by California State University, Monterey Bay would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

ADDENDUM

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, MONTEREY BAY

Founded in 1994, [Cal State Monterey Bay](#) is one of the youngest CSU campuses. Situated on the former Fort Ord military base, Cal State Monterey Bay serves over 8,000 students – over 87 percent of whom are undergraduates – and is home to over 30,000 alumni around the globe. Ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as a top 15 regional university in the West, top 10 in public regional universities, and second in social upward mobility in the West, Cal State Monterey Bay’s mission aims to prepare students to contribute responsibly to California and the global community by providing transformative learning experiences in an inclusive environment. Since its founding, Cal State Monterey Bay has uniquely become one of the most residential campuses in the CSU system with over fifty-two percent of students living on campus. Its diverse student body receives personal attention in small classes while pursuing degrees in 25 undergraduate and nine graduate majors across six academic colleges:

- [College of Arts, Humanities, and Sciences](#)
- [College of Business](#)
- [College of Education](#)
- [College of Extended Education and International Programs](#)
- [College of Health Sciences and Human Services](#)
- [College of Science](#)

Cal State Monterey Bay is academically known for strengths in marine science, leveraging a [long-term partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium](#), and programs in health sciences, engineering, agricultural science, and hospitality management, reflecting the region’s developing industries. In 2025, Cal State Monterey Bay was classified as a Research College and University (RCU) by the Carnegie Foundation.

Although Cal State Monterey Bay serves students across the entire state of California and beyond, 38 percent of its undergraduates come from Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties, which reflects its commitment to serving the local community. The university has been federally designated as a Minority Serving Institution and a Hispanic Serving Institution and prides itself on making higher education accessible to traditionally underserved and low-income populations. As much as 72 percent of Cal State Monterey Bay’s students receive some form of financial aid, and over 50 percent of students identify as first generation and as members of an underrepresented population. Students participate in over 105 active student clubs and organizations that represent a diverse body of interests, values, and fields of study.

Cal State Monterey Bay is committed to the success of its student-athletes within the California Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) and the NCAA Division II. The Cal State Monterey Bay Otters compete in 14 intercollegiate varsity sports: men's sports include baseball, basketball, cross country, golf, and soccer; while women's sports include basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, track & field (indoor and

outdoor), volleyball, and water polo. To these ends, philanthropic investments for student support within scholarships and athletics are strong opportunities of interest.

In April 2024, Cal State Monterey Bay launched a [new brand](#) campaign to enhance its presence and redefine its identity. The new brand kit comprised a [logo](#), *The Strength of Us* slogan, and [YouTube videos](#). The university's website is currently in the midst of a redesign that is targeted to conclude by spring 2026.

Philanthropy and Finances

All CSU campuses have two main funding sources: the state General Fund and student tuition and fees. State funding now covers slightly more than half of the CSU's operating costs, with tuition and fees making up for the remainder. Auxiliaries and philanthropic support generate additional revenue needed for essential services that supplement state-supported activities. Cal State Monterey Bay's operating budget was \$160 million in Fiscal Year 2025. In the same year, its endowment was valued at over \$60 million, and the university raised \$15 million in annual philanthropic revenue. Serving its core mission to provide a transformative education, future fundraising priorities will be shaped around and in support of areas outlined in the strategic plan, including, but not limited to, strengthened academic programs; improved facilities, classrooms, and laboratories; and enhanced faculty support alongside four college-naming opportunities.

Foundation of CSUMB

The [Foundation of CSUMB](#) (Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) auxiliary organization established to advise, govern, and oversee policy and direction, and assist with the leadership and general promotion of the Foundation of California State University, Monterey Bay to support the organization's mission and needs. The foundation board is comprised of 15 dedicated community leaders across business, academia, finance, healthcare, and civic government committed to the university and advancing its mission.

The Division of University Advancement

Cal State Monterey Bay's University Advancement division includes more than 30 full-time staff, encompassing development (including individual, corporate and foundation relations, and planned giving), alumni relations, advancement services, marketing and communications, government affairs, university events, and administrative staff. In December 2020, Cal State Monterey Bay concluded its first-ever comprehensive campaign, [Vision 20/20: The Campaign for Monterey Bay](#), and successfully surpassed its original \$100 million goal. For more information about University Advancement, visit <https://csumb.edu/giving/>.

LEADERSHIP

Michael LaPlante, Vice President for University Advancement and Executive Director of the CSUMB Foundation

Michael LaPlante was appointed vice president for university advancement on June 1, 2025. LaPlante brings over 25 years of experience in higher education development and campaign leadership, including prior experience in the CSU system.

LaPlante joined Cal State Monterey Bay from Western Colorado University (WCU) where he served as the vice president of advancement and executive director of the WCU Foundation. LaPlante was instrumental in the planning, execution, and success of WCU's Elevate Western campaign, which surpassed its initial \$80 million goal. Under LaPlante's campaign leadership, WCU doubled its annual contributions and its endowment and received three of the four largest gifts in WCU's history.

Before joining WCU, LaPlante spent 15 years at Colorado State University in progressive leadership roles. As associate vice president for advancement, LaPlante oversaw gift planning, regional development, principal gifts, and corporate and foundation relations during CSU's \$1 billion State Your Purpose campaign. LaPlante's early career in athletics development began in the California State University system, including roles at San Diego State University (SDSU) and California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly).

LaPlante earned an MBA from Colorado State University and a bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University.