



# THE WINSOR SCHOOL

## **Search for the Director of Strategic Communications The Winsor School Boston, Massachusetts**

*“Winsor creates strong, powerful female voices, and that’s something that’s very much needed. I know when I leave Winsor, I’m ready to speak my voice because I’ve been in this environment where I’ve been told constantly that I am capable and I am powerful enough to make change and achieve my dreams and do whatever it is that I want.”*

– Winsor School Student

### **THE SEARCH**

The Winsor School, an exceptional independent girls' school for academically promising and motivated students in grades five through twelve, seeks a creative and accomplished leader to serve as director of strategic communications. Located in the heart of Boston’s Longwood Medical and Academic Research area, Winsor's unique location fosters a culture that mirrors the dynamic energy and innovative spirit of the city. The school enrolls approximately 470 students from more than 50 different local communities in and around Boston. Winsor’s reputation for academic excellence and success belies a warm and caring environment that encourages personal growth and lifelong friendships. A diverse, vibrant community that values intellectual curiosity, authentic engagement, and personal integrity, the school challenges its students to lead lives of purpose as responsible, generous-minded people.

Reporting to the head of school and working with colleagues across Winsor, the director of strategic communications will define and implement a comprehensive, high-level communications strategy to support the school’s current priorities and ambitions for the future. The director will ensure that the communications program unifies the school’s messaging; supports and furthers its academic reputation and resources; and engages all its constituencies both on and off campus. In that effort, the director will bring the communications office to new levels of strategic innovation across all media; oversee all aspects of the communications and messaging; and develop strong, interdependent relationships with key stakeholders.

This is a tremendous opportunity for a dynamic, ambitious, and systems-oriented communications professional to play a critical role in reinforcing Winsor's existing strengths and plotting its future trajectory. The director joins at an especially pivotal moment as Winsor prepares for its most ambitious comprehensive campaign to date, for which this individual will develop and oversee communication plans in close collaboration with advancement colleagues. The ideal candidate will bring a minimum of ten years of related experience in developing and implementing multifaceted communications efforts that position and elevate the perception of an entire institution or major unit with multiple audiences.

This person will need exceptional strategic planning and project management skills; a full understanding of the communications process from creative conceptualization to fulfillment, including expert knowledge of traditional, digital, and social media as well as media relations and crisis communications; outstanding written and oral communication skills; and demonstrated success fostering an inclusive team culture and building an efficient, cohesive, and collaborative team. The director will be an accessible and approachable colleague, as well as an active member of the Winsor community, with the integrity, warmth, and openness to learning that are consistent with Winsor's values. A bachelor's degree is required; an advanced degree is preferred.

The Winsor School has retained Jack Gorman 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.

## **THE WINSOR SCHOOL**

In 1886, Miss Mary Pickard Winsor started a six-month school in Boston, beginning with eight girls in a private home on Beacon Hill. The school grew quickly and began sending graduates to college in 1895. Unlike many girls' schools of the era, Winsor persevered. Today, Winsor remains a school with high aspirations and a clear sense of purpose, now living and evolving in a new century. It is a complex and active community, shaped by its history, inspiring faculty, and talented students.

The Winsor experience shapes its students in every possible way, with a mission to prepare young women to pursue their aspirations and contribute to the world. While classroom learning is the core, it is just the beginning. Girls are not only thinkers and scholars but also: artists, athletes, community volunteers, club members, leaders, mentors, and, importantly, classmates and friends. And while the Winsor experience shapes them, the students also shape Winsor. They give fresh life to time-honored traditions, making them their own. Girls lead everything. They speak their minds, giving voice to student issues and often presenting or performing at weekly assemblies. The Winsor School fosters an environment where students can bring their whole selves, growing intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially. The school emphasizes how important it is to actively and positively define yourself and how risky it is to allow others to define who you are, what your ability is, how much you are worth, or what you believe.

## Winsor Academics

The Winsor curriculum is rich and demanding, with a ‘college preparatory’ focus. Faculty members stretch students to think logically, creatively, and compassionately, and to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. [Winsor teachers](#) are accomplished, creative individuals who know their subjects intimately. What’s more, they care deeply about their students, who are engaged, motivated, and love to learn. The school provides space for students to find what they are passionate about, and teachers support, encourage, and are the cheerleaders for their students’ curiosity, acting as advisors, coaches, club leaders, and role models. The average class size at Winsor is 13, and 83% of faculty hold advanced degrees. Winsor teachers believe that the best lessons come when there is buy-in from the students and engage with them as colleagues in many ways, giving equal value to students’ ideas.

Over the past decade, The Winsor School has reconceptualized [academic support](#), shifting away from a deficit model of academic support to a school-wide collaborative support paradigm; academic support practices are driven not by a perceived need or a demand for accommodations. Instead, the model is driven by the student-teacher relationship. Winsor focuses on three emerging elements of academic support: (1) giving teachers agency in the academic support process, (2) changing the language used to communicate about students’ struggles, and, most important, (3) giving students voice to write their own learning narratives. This change in Winsor’s institutional approach allows every student to develop the self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-efficacy they need to succeed both in our school and after they leave Winsor.

A graduation requirement introduced in 2008-2009, the [Independent Learning Experience](#) (ILE) gives Winsor seniors an opportunity to pursue a specific interest independently. Each student designs their own project, guided by a faculty seminar leader and an expert mentor in their area of interest. Winsor students engage in the ILE during the final four weeks of senior year. The project culminates in a celebration where students present their projects to the whole Winsor community.

A critical dimension of academic excellence in the 21st century is preparation for responsible participation in the global community. At Winsor, thinking globally means thinking about the skills, habits of mind, attitudes, and aptitudes that the 21st century will demand: to get along with many types of people, to understand many cultures, to be flexible and resilient. While this begins in the classroom, the school offers a growing array of [global and off-campus opportunities](#), including exchanges, trips, and Semester-Away programs that expand girls’ minds. In preparing its students to act responsibly in this interconnected and interdependent world, Winsor is committed to ensuring that its students not only understand the nature of globalization but also appreciate the personal stakes and responsibilities they have as global citizens.

For more information about academics at Winsor, please visit the school’s website to review the school’s [Academic Departments](#), the [Lower School Curriculum Guide](#), and the [Upper School Curriculum Guide](#).

## The Winsor Community and the Student Experience

Core to Winsor’s identity is its commitment to creating an environment of respect, equity, and inclusion. Winsor values, affirms, and teaches a belief in the dignity and humanity of every person and a commitment to understanding individual and group differences. The school’s mission underscores its commitment to diversity, and reflecting that commitment, the student body includes girls of different races, religions, nationalities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Over 50% of students in the Upper School identify as multiracial and/or students of color. Representing a \$5.36 million budget, 25% of students receive financial aid.

The school is committed to providing a safe, supportive setting so that students have the opportunity to explore and clarify their own beliefs and values, take risks, and think and speak for themselves. This includes several affinity and community groups that serve to strengthen the Winsor community as a whole by increasing the ways a student can find connection, support, and voice at Winsor starting with smaller groups of people who want to connect on specific areas of experience or identity. Winsor’s affinity groups include: SISTERS is an affinity group for Black students; AsIAm is an affinity group for students of Asian and South Asian descent; and SOMOS is an affinity group for Latinx students. MOSAIC is a safe space for those with two or more conflicting identities in how they navigate the world. The First Generation Experience is for Winsor students who are immigrants and for people whose parents immigrated to America.

To learn more about Affinity and Community at Winsor, please visit <https://www.winsor.edu/student-life/affinity-and-community>.

There is somewhat of a common misconception that Winsor students are “only students” – that is, strictly focused on academics. In actuality, playing sports, doing theatre, dancing, singing, and more are all things that make up who Winsor students are. [Athletics](#) is an integral part of the Winsor experience. Every season, student-athletes gain lifelong lessons in the value of competition, perseverance, and the true meaning of teamwork. Teams are led by coaches, teachers who serve as assistants, and expert athletes from the community, and student-athletes enjoy the school’s standout athletic facilities in the truly unique setting in the heart of the Longwood Area. Every year, Winsor has several teams that win the league championship and even New England Championships. Some teams have national-level victories as well.

The [arts](#) are woven into the fabric of every Winsor student’s experience. On the stage as well as in the school’s beautiful and well-resourced studio spaces, student-artists think creatively, work collaboratively, and explore and express their own voices and passions, gaining confidence that extends into everything they do. Student artwork is showcased throughout the school’s hallways. Outside of class, co-curricular activities such as art clubs and art trips give students an opportunity to further explore their creativity. Winsor’s beautiful new performing arts center supports a wide array of classes and co-curricular opportunities in dance, theater, choral, orchestral, and contemporary music.

Winsor students engage in a wide range of [community service](#) opportunities, from tutoring at a local elementary school to running an exercise program for seniors. The choice is up to the students; the school doesn't require service. The fact that so many students get passionately involved reflects their generous-mindedness. Winsor also builds time for [clubs](#) into all students' weekly schedules, which allows them to explore issues, develop new skills, or simply relax and have fun in the middle of a busy day. Some also give students the opportunity to work on activities with boys from nearby schools.

The Winsor community understands that [wellness](#), both personal and community-wide, drives deep, meaningful learning and leads to success in the pursuit of personal aspirations and in making purposeful contributions to the world. In addition to academic support, counseling, and health services, Winsor has a longstanding Wellness Education program, which includes a formal class in grades five through eleven. The Peer Support Program provides Class VII and VIII students the opportunity to support the school community through mentorship, social connection, and effective leadership roles, focusing on community building, wellness education, and events.

*"At Winsor, I've been able to gain so many new skills of advocacy and communication, and just being able to explore my learning and not be afraid of messing up or saying the wrong thing. It's a great environment for young women especially to be in a place where everyone is encouraging you, everyone wants you to do your best, and everyone wants your learning to be enriched. ... Because there's such a strong sense of community, being in an all-girls environment really helps you feel like you can be the person you want to be."*

– Winsor School Student

## Leadership

The Winsor School has long benefited from strong, stable leadership. There have been just eight heads of school since Winsor's founding in 1886. Sarah Pelmas became Winsor's head of school in July 2016 after serving as the associate head and head of the Upper School at the National Cathedral School in Washington, DC. Prior to that, she held multiple roles at University High School in San Francisco, teaching English as well as serving as dean of students and interim athletic director. At each of these schools, Dr. Pelmas has led strategic work including comprehensive strategic plans, curricular revisioning, redesigns of faculty evaluation, and schedule creation. She has also taught in the English departments of Stanford, Syracuse University, the City College of San Francisco, and the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Pelmas holds an AB from Princeton, an MA in English and Creative Writing from Syracuse University, and a PhD in Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley. She serves as President of the Board for AISNE, and President of the Board for The 1911 Group, as well as being on the Board of Trustees at the Belmont Hill School, and the boards of the Fenway Alliance and The Longwood Collective.

Under her leadership, The Winsor School has completed its 10-year accreditation, created a Wellness Department, laid the groundwork for a campaign focused on scholarships and faculty support, launched DEI initiatives based on data and student voice, restructured the financial aid model for middle-income families, and started a two-year comprehensive curriculum review.

In addition, the school is led by a [Board of Trustees](#) that includes alums as well as current and past parents. Recent work by the board has included the current strategic plan and a new campus master plan. Among the board's highest priorities are strong financial aid (currently \$5.36 million) and compensation for the faculty and staff in the top quartile of nationwide peer schools. The current board president is Allison Kaneb Pellegrino '89, P'21, '22.

## **DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

The director of strategic communications is responsible for strengthening awareness and understanding of Winsor's distinctive programs, history, and mission across key constituencies and within the wider community. Leading a team of three direct reports, as well as external writers, designers, and consultants, the director ensures an integrated approach to the school's creative and messaging platforms across all channels. Reporting to the head of school, the director works closely with multiple departments, including admissions, advancement, college counseling, wellness, as well as senior administrators and faculty.

Major responsibilities and duties include:

- Oversee and manage all aspects of the workflow in the Communications Department, including all outside contractors and in-house talent, and ensure visual and narrative consistency that aligns with Winsor's brand.
- Refine and steward the school's narrative to include its complex history, vibrant present, and exciting future.
- Support the head of school in being the chief narrator and storyteller for Winsor. Advise the head of school and senior administrators on strategic communication, especially in times of crisis.
- Together with the director of advancement, manage the creation of exciting and inspiring campaign communication assets, as well as materials for other advancement events and engagement strategies.
- Oversee the writing and timely release of donor stewardship letters, endowment reports, and the Annual Report in coordination with the advancement team.
- Guide planning, design, and content for the Winsor Bulletin, as well as the publications associated with admissions, advancement, and special events of the school.
- Oversee the school's website design and content development, as well as the school's social media presence and marketing strategy.
- Respond to media requests, manage public relations, and oversee the school's crisis communications plan.
- Supervise a three-member team of direct reports, and manage the department budget.
- Maintain understanding of new developments within the field and foster ongoing relationships with professionals at peer institutions through association involvement.
- Connect fully with the life of the school and perform other duties as assigned by the head of school.

## Qualifications and Experience

Successful candidates will possess many, if not most, of the following professional qualifications and personal characteristics:

- A deep commitment to independent school education, and a keen understanding of Winsor's mission, goals, and history.
- Significant experience in communications and marketing leadership for complex institutions.
- A strong background in writing, and proven hands-on skills in editing, marketing, and web and print management.
- Experience in working and building relationships with the media and an understanding of crisis communications.
- Superior strategic skills with a strong grasp of industry best practices and a holistic understanding of all aspects of communications, positioning, and messaging.
- Strength at, and genuine excitement about, managing multiple projects and competing deadlines.
- High standards of excellence and professionalism, as well as the ability to maintain confidentiality.
- Demonstrated staff management and team-building skills.
- Sense of humor, love of collaboration, and enthusiastic commitment to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the work.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.

## To Apply

Jack Gorman is leading this search with Nicole Poe, Kennedy Kearney-Fischer, Elizabeth Neustaedter, and Ryan Cheung. For more information, to submit a nomination, or to apply for this role, please visit:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/winsor-school/director-communications>

*The Winsor School is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate against any application for employment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic testing, veteran status, physical or mental disability, or on any other basis prohibited by law. The Winsor School is committed to an equitable and inclusive program and a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are therefore especially encouraged to apply.*