



Senior Vice President for Communications
Helios Education Foundation
Phoenix, AZ or Tampa, FL

Helios Education Foundation exists to support postsecondary attainment for low-income and under-represented communities in Arizona and Florida. Driven by our fundamental beliefs of Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, Helios has invested nearly \$350 million in partnerships and initiatives focused on improving education outcomes in the two states we serve.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Helios Education Foundation (Helios) seeks a Senior Vice President for Communications (SVP) to join the Foundation's senior leadership team and spearhead Helios's enterprise-wide communications strategy and execution. As Helios implements its ambitious [Five-Year Impact Plan](#), focused on key drivers essential to getting students on track for college attainment, the role of the SVP for Communications is mission-critical: leading Helios's communications, brand and reputation management, and message creation and alignment in support of an integrated portfolio of investment, research, and policy efforts.

Helios is more than a grant-maker. Our strategy for delivering results in early learning, college access, and college attainment includes the integration of four key domains of our work. We seek to influence **policy** changes that can bring systemic improvements and to identify laser-focused **community investments** that can serve as a proof of concept for policy considerations and can lead to spreading effective practices. Original **research and data** drive our approaches. And, through each of these areas, **strategic communication** is used to amplify important insights and to build public will for effective improvements. In addition, Helios documents and assesses our efforts in each of these areas to understand our impact and continually refine our work for increased impact in the future.

The SVP for Communications will report directly to the President and oversee all the Foundation's external and internal communications. Partnering with the President and the senior leadership team, the SVP will develop and manage an annual communications approach that supports the Foundation's Impact Plan. They will effectively design and implement a full suite of internal and external communications activities to foster a strong sense of community among the Helios team, as well as among grantees and key partners, and will enhance the Foundation's reputation at the highest levels of education, research, and

policy discourse in Arizona, Florida, and, where appropriate, nationally. The SVP for Communications will be located in Phoenix or Tampa and will be expected to travel monthly to the other office.

The SVP will provide strategic, institution-wide communications counsel on thought leadership and brand management, lead communications activities that amplify Helios's policy and research efforts, and support the development of organizational culture and change management efforts. Leading a team of communications staff members and consultants, the SVP will oversee enterprise-level digital efforts such as the website and Helios's social platforms and will play a coordinating role in designing and delivering concepts, ideas, and plans for convenings and partner events. The SVP will support the creation and promotion of Helios' research publications, including writing, editing, and design, and will manage public relations and media efforts in Arizona and Florida. The SVP for communications will be a trusted partner and liaison to internal teams to bring projects to life and highlight the impact of the foundation's efforts.

HELIOS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Helios Education Foundation was created in 2004 through the conversion and sale of Southwest Student Services Corporation and began investing in education with an initial endowment of more than \$500 million. In 2021, Helios launched its impact strategy, a targeted commitment to concentrate on improving outcomes for low-income and Latino students in Arizona and low-income and Black students in Florida, based on the belief that the Foundation's actions in the near term will impact student outcomes for the next generation. The impact strategy is based on data showing that these student populations are those struggling the most.

Through a multi-pronged approach, the Foundation seeks to more effectively achieve significant improvements required to foster equitable progress across the education continuum. This integrated approach includes:

- ***Performance-based community investments:*** With attention to the importance of place and the challenges of each state and the communities within them, Helios focuses on a combination of long-term strategic investments as well as new and innovative approaches to addressing intractable problems. To ensure the reach, influence, and impact of their investments, Helios also provides collaborative planning, strategic advice, and often communications, policy, and research support to partner organizations. With each investment, Helios serves as a change ally, collaborating to address challenges and to create a roadmap in Arizona and Florida to improve education outcomes.
- ***Systemic public policy efforts:*** Helios seeks significant changes in education policies that support equitable education in both states, including commitments to education funding allocated more intentionally to those most in need of additional resources. The Foundation also serves as a thought leader, focusing the attention of policymakers and other influencers on solutions that provide the most leverage in getting students on track for college attendance and attainment.

This includes leveraging the Foundation's investments to serve as proof of concept and a catalyst for policy changes, as well as the strategic use of the ASU Helios Decision Center for Educational Excellence.

- **Research and data:** Helios works directly with the state departments of education, boards of education, and other key stakeholders to influence educational outcomes in both Arizona and Florida. As a thought leader in postsecondary attainment, the Foundation carries out independent research—at Helios and in partnership with strategic stakeholders—that identifies solutions to educational inequity. This enables Helios to ground the Foundation's investment and policy strategies in research and data, thereby increasing their chance of backing the best approaches and having the greatest impact in preparing students for success in college and in life.

Helios Education Campus: Opened in 2021, the 65,000-square-foot, architecturally sophisticated Helios Education Campus enables collaboration, community, and partnership. The Phoenix Campus is home to the Foundation's main offices and key Arizona education partners Aliento, Education Forward Arizona, and Teach for America–Phoenix. The flagship [Vince Roig Convening Center](#) provides state-of-art facilities on the Campus to enable collaboration and partnership among education stakeholders. The [Helios Decision Theater](#), at the center of the Campus, is part of the ASU Helios Decision Center for Educational Excellence, a collaborative partnership between the Foundation and the university. The Decision Center centralizes data so that researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and investors can more effectively understand the current education landscape and system and visualize the impact of potential new policies and solutions on education outcomes.

PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This role is designed for someone who sees communications and engagement as a lever for making a meaningful difference in the education outcomes and opportunities of low-income and under-represented students. Helios Education Foundation seeks a creative and experienced communications strategist with the emotional intelligence to communicate effectively with diverse audiences and to integrate the communications needs of several internal departments into cohesive and impactful external and internal communications strategies, messages, and activities.

The SVP for Communications will:

- Partner closely with the President in shaping the Foundation's narrative and identity, including brand management; support executive leadership messaging, talking points, Board relations, partner relations, and media and social media;
- Collaborate with senior leadership team members to design and execute an annual communications approach aligned with the Foundation's impact strategy and annual strategic goals for policy, research, and investment;

- Implement and manage Helios's external communications strategy at the enterprise level as well as in Arizona and Florida, including message and content development, and collaborations with external partners and grantees;
- Oversee public relations and media in Arizona and Florida to tell compelling stories, raise Helios's profile, and accurately position the foundation's policy initiatives, research, and grantees;
- Implement and manage Helios's internal communications strategy, including developing messaging to advance organizational culture and change management efforts; keeping team members in both Arizona and Florida informed of important activities and milestones; engaging team members in the evolution of organizational culture;
- Continually refine Helios's messages, tone, and voice, ensuring cohesion and coherence across all departments as well as across all platforms, including the website, social platforms, internal communications, external presentations, convenings, media engagements, etc.;
- Oversee and provide support for the Helios website and regularly identify and contribute fresh content to advance Helios' communications through this digital medium;
- Oversee and support Helios's social media strategy, including X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn, and continually identify new ideas to advance Helios's reach and impact through social media;
- Work with grantees to align their communications with the Foundation's priorities, especially around stated key drivers of impact, and to support grantee communications needs;
- Keep abreast of emerging data and trends related to Helios impact areas and follow conversations, opportunities, and issues affecting education equity and factors leading to postsecondary success; advise the senior leadership on key strategic concerns from a communications lens
- Direct a range of partners, consultants and team members to deliver a unified and responsive communications experience; Manage vendor relationships, liaise with internal colleagues and teams, and work with multiple external partners effectively to bring projects to life.

QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal candidate will:

- Be a seasoned professional in communications and/or strategy development work; knowledge of and experience leading communications within foundations, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions or policy agencies;
- Lead, guide and advance a team of communications staff members and consultants;

- Possess excellent writing and editing skills with the ability to tell compelling stories, share takeaways and inspire action using clear language; bring a sharp eye for editing content and copywriting; and create content in multiple formats (e.g., longer form articles, social media, speechwriting, blog posts, PowerPoint decks, executive memos, etc.) across diverse audiences, including leadership, team members, and external partners and grantees.
- Contribute a passion for educational equity and for eliminating student achievement and degree completion gaps;
- Demonstrate a successful track record of developing strategic communications approaches and working effectively and inclusively with teams and vendors to steward multi-faceted, organization-wide projects effectively from start to finish;
- Possess skills to evaluate, anticipate, and manage reputational risks to the foundation and its leadership;
- Demonstrate experience managing visual and editorial quality across various digital platforms, including website and social media channels as well as directing the successful execution of events, annual reports, and internal and external collateral;
- Demonstrate a proven ability to build relationships and influence outcomes, both with and without formal authority; and
- Bring creativity, humility, warmth, integrity, empathy, a sense of humor, and a strong work ethic; be willing to continually identify opportunities and ideas to advance the Helios Foundation's mission.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent electronically to the following via <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/helios-education-foundation/senior-vice-president-communications>

Nella Young and Stephanie Simon
Isaacson, Miller
263 Summer Street, Floor 7
Boston, MA 02210

Helios Education Foundation is a diverse and dynamic professional learning organization that values a broad array of backgrounds, knowledge, and expertise. Helios believes that equity is most effectively achieved by teams who are diverse and inclusive, who reflect the communities served, and who are encouraged to generate bold solutions. Helios Education Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer actively committed to building a diverse staff and creating an inclusive environment for all employees.