

Classification and Qualification



STANDARDS

The California State University System

Public Affairs/Communications Specialist

Class Codes: 0800 - 0802

Date Established: 12/01/00

OVERVIEW:

The Public Affairs/Communications Specialist is a broad classification with three position skill levels. Positions in this classification have varying levels of responsibility for carrying out the communications, public affairs and/or marketing programs of the university. Incumbents are involved directly in developing, writing and/or editing a variety of print or electronically-based communication materials, as well as coordinating related public affairs, media, community relations and marketing activities. Incumbents are responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with relevant internal and external constituents to ensure that the public receives relevant, timely, and positive information about the university and its programs. Additionally, incumbents may be assigned specific responsibilities relative to the ongoing management of communication materials on the campus web-site.

Position Skill Level I - Incumbents at this level typically perform standard and straight-forward assignments related to writing and editing communication pieces, public affairs, media relations, marketing and related research, and/or sports information. The focus of the work is on implementing communication and related plans using pre-established concepts and specifications. Incumbents also assist higher level employees on a variety of communications/marketing projects.

Position Skill Level II - Incumbents at this level work independently on a broader range of projects involving the execution of public affairs, media relations, publications, marketing, and/or sports information programs. The work at this level is more complex, broader in scope and has significant impact on the success of the project or program. Incumbents must have thorough knowledge of the program and applicable communications techniques, be able to work fairly autonomously, and exercise sound judgment and discretion in the completion of assignments and projects. The work involves daily contact with university management, members of the media, and other key constituencies.

Position Skill Level III - Incumbents at this level serve a more strategic role in developing communication, marketing and public affairs plans to support long-term objectives and to increase the visibility of the university. Incumbents may be responsible for coordinating the daily operation of a public affairs, alumni affairs or related program. Incumbents have the highest level of contact with university management and the media and respond to immediate requests when the department head is not available. The work requires a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of marketing and communications theory and media vehicles.

CORE AREAS:

The Public Affairs/Communications Specialist classification may be focused in one or more of the following core areas. The work examples included here are not meant to be all inclusive or indicate a specific level within the classification; rather, they are examples that illustrate the variety of activities that may fall into each core area.

Public Affairs – Coordinating the public affairs program on the campus; advising university management and faculty on public affairs policies; writing public service announcements and press releases; drafting speeches; assessing the public relations impact of campus events and activities; establishing and implementing public information systems; creating liaisons with community and/or governmental agencies and organizations; serving as an internal liaison for such programs as alumni affairs and parent organizations; and coordinating or participating in key public events including those related to fund-raising and development.

Communications Development - Writing, editing, and proofreading copy to produce standard print or electronically based communications for targeted internal and external audiences; collaborating with designers, photographers, faculty and others on the theme, design and content of print, electronic and web-based publications to maximize impact; participating in the ongoing management of the campus web-site; and developing, researching and positioning stories including conducting interviews and creating story content and layout.

Media Relations - Promoting and publicizing institutional activities and programs to the media; capitalizing on media opportunities by identifying potentially newsworthy topics; determining strategic placement of information in the media; preparing and disseminating information and news stories to the media; coordinating media relations for trade shows and other events; assisting in the coordination of media briefings; acting as a university representative and/or spokesperson for media contacts; cultivating media relationships; advising faculty and staff on media interviews; and setting up speakers' bureaus.

Programmatic/Institutional Marketing - Developing strategies to promote the image of the university and/or programs by using market research data to determine the most effective techniques and approaches for reaching target audiences; identifying the needs and interests of various constituent groups; translating the results of research into strategic communication efforts including selecting the best medium to achieve goals; creating marketing programs to better position the university to achieve its goals; and overseeing telemarketing outreach functions.

Athletics Marketing and Promotion - Promoting and publicizing the intercollegiate athletics program through written publications and other media; cultivating corporate sponsorships and developing corporate marketing packages; representing the athletics program to the media; advising intercollegiate athletes and coaches at press conferences or other events; managing and coordinating electronic and print media to market sports events; coordinating sports promotions with student groups; and coordinating athletic events including setting up the press box and overseeing the collection and verification of sports statistics.

ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS:

Entry to the first level within this classification requires knowledge of the fundamentals of public affairs and/or media relations, and/or some exposure to marketing and marketing research. This background normally is obtained through a college degree, which includes relevant coursework in the field, and up to two years of related professional or technical experience. In addition, strong written and verbal communication skills with a solid foundation in grammar, spelling, and the composition of various communication vehicles are essential to initial entry to this classification.

POSITION SKILL LEVELS:

Three position skill levels are defined within this classification denoting a progression of responsibility, knowledge, and skill requirements. Progression from a lower to a higher skill level is referred to as an *in-classification progression*. The factors used to determine position skill level include: complexity, scope and impact of the work performed; level, type and scope of knowledge required; autonomy exercised and level of supervision received; position accountability for work results; judgment and discretion required by the position; problem solving and analytical skills required; level of creativity and ingenuity required by the work; and the level and diversity of contacts and interactive capabilities required by the position.

A position is placed at a skill level where the majority of and/or most critical position responsibilities and skill requirements fall in relation to the position skill levels defined below. Management assigns position responsibilities and their associated skill requirements. It is important to note that the position skill level definitions do not delineate entry requirements for each skill level, but are composites of the typical position at each level. Entry qualifications are defined for the first position skill level of the classification. Further progression within the classification depends first, on the need for a position at a higher skill level, second, on the nature of the duties and requirements of the position, and third, on an employee's demonstrated and applied skills and abilities.

POSITION SKILL LEVEL I

Typical nature of work assignments:

Performance of a variety of administrative, technical and analytical duties of moderate complexity related to day-to-day communications activities to promote the objectives and programs of the university.

Day-to-day work is performed under general supervision, with specific instructions for new assignments. Typically not fully accountable for final work results or products. More experienced staff members review highly visible work.

Assignments require the use of some judgment, but standard procedures and protocols are usually followed.

Work requires some innovation, as required, to identify story opportunities, to develop an angle for written or other communications pieces, or to assist in developing campaigns.

Focus is on own work assignments rather than lead work direction to others, but work may involve providing training to less experienced staff.

Typical knowledge and skill requirements:

Foundation knowledge of general practices, methods and procedures related to public affairs, media relations, marketing, and/or sports information. Ability to keep abreast of public policy and public affairs issues.

Working knowledge of protocols and institutional etiquette related to public and media relations.

Basic knowledge and understanding of media outlets including print, television, and radio. Ability to work with the media for the coverage of events.

Basic knowledge of market research and related techniques. Working knowledge of summary statistics as they relate to research or sports information.

Basic knowledge of applicable copyright and other laws pertaining to written materials, news media and confidentiality.

Working knowledge of applicable software packages.

Knowledge of basic web communication techniques, vehicles and formats.

Strong writing and editing skills to quickly produce clear and concise standard documents for internal and external publication.

Ability to appropriately handle sensitive and confidential information.

Strong interpersonal skills to develop and maintain relationships within the university and community and with the media.

POSITION SKILL LEVEL II

Typical nature of work assignments:

Independent performance of specialized or varied communication assignments related to public affairs, media relations, publications development, marketing and research, and/or athletics marketing. Work is more complex, broader in scope and has significant impact on the success of a project/campaign. Frequently serves as a media spokesperson and/or senior editor.

Often accountable for smaller programs/projects or a major portion of a larger program/project. May provide project leadership to less experienced staff.

Work is performed fairly autonomously under general supervision and requires regularly exercising judgment and discretion to interpret policies and procedures and objectives. Work is reviewed for soundness of judgment.

Ingenuity is used to develop communication themes, concepts and ideas and to determine methods to achieve goals.

Work involves frequent contact with university management, faculty and staff.

Work involves regular contact with outside agencies and constituencies. Often represents the university in routine media contacts. Conducts media outreach to build relationships and university credibility with the media.

May provide lead work direction to less senior staff including assisting in the selection process and making and reviewing work assignments.

In addition to Position Skill Level I knowledge and skill requirements, work assignments typically require:

Working knowledge of and ability to apply standard theories, practices, principles and techniques related to communications in the public affairs, media, marketing, and/or sports information areas.

Thorough knowledge of and ability to use effectively media outlets including planning media coverage and media publicity campaigns for the university and events.

Ability to build and manage more sophisticated media contacts.

Demonstrated ability to keep abreast of campus events and subject matter expertise in relation to current events to identify and capitalize on media opportunities that will promote the university and increase positive media coverage.

Working knowledge of copyright and other applicable laws pertaining to publications and the media.

Thorough knowledge of web communication techniques, vehicles and formats. Ability to effectively use web technology to achieve communication goals.

Ability to analyze and select pertinent facts and integrate them into communication vehicles.

Strong story development and journalistic writing skills, as well as advanced editorial skills. Knowledge of interview techniques and the ability to define and deliver media messages.

Working knowledge of marketing and research techniques and methods. Ability to apply market research to identify communication needs and target audiences.

Ability to apply appropriate statistical techniques and methods to research or sports information.

Exceptional interpersonal skills, including strong public speaking, listening and interpretive skills.

Ability to provide lead work direction.

POSITION SKILL LEVEL III

Typical nature of work assignments:

Development, planning and execution of communication, public affairs and media programs and plans including research, identification of objectives, development of themes and concepts, and overseeing creation of content and communication materials.

Focus of work is on marketing and positioning the university to meet strategic and long-term objectives. Work is performed under general direction and is reviewed against goals and objectives. Often serves as official spokesperson in absence of department head.

Considerable judgment and discretion are exercised in developing strategic plans and interpreting policies.

Appreciable ingenuity is used to conceive of communication strategies and develop communication concepts, ideas and campaigns.

Serves as a prime contact for internal and external constituents and handles more sensitive and complex media contacts. Advises management on the handling of media issues.

May have responsibility for day-to-day operations including providing lead work direction to staff.

In addition to Position Skill Level I and II knowledge and skill requirements, work assignments typically require:

Comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of communication, public affairs, media and/or marketing theories and concepts in order to develop and execute communication strategies and plans to promote and position the university.

Expert knowledge of university communication objectives and ability to translate them into effective communication and media campaigns.

Ability to understand issues from a broad, strategic perspective.

Thorough knowledge of applicable copyright and other laws pertaining to publications and the news media.

Ability to effectively manage media relations and apply effective media strategies and techniques.

Demonstrated ability to market story concepts to university officials and media outlets.

Comprehensive knowledge of marketing and research techniques and methods. Ability to use market research to enhance the impact of communication strategies and campaigns.

Working knowledge of appropriate use of statistical techniques.

Expert networking and interpersonal skills including strong consultative and persuasive skills to work with internal and external constituents and the media.

Expert writing and editorial skills.

Demonstrated organizational skills.