

THE WARD GROUP

The Hotchkiss School Chief Communications Officer

Organization:

The Hotchkiss School is an independent boarding school located in Lakeville, Connecticut. Founded in 1891, the school provides an education of academic distinction to 625 students in grades 9 through 12 and a small number of postgraduates. Students at Hotchkiss come from across the United States and around the world. Graduates attend many of the most selective universities and colleges.

The Hotchkiss School seeks to inspire a diverse range of students who are committed to the betterment of self and society, and to cultivate in them at the highest standards of excellence, imagination and intellect, openness and personal integrity, empathy and responsible citizenship that they may discover and fulfill their potential as individuals fully engaged in our world.

The aim of The Hotchkiss School, since its foundation, has been to provide a dynamic environment for teaching and learning, as well as exceptional preparation for future study and fulfilling adult lives. The residential community—the network of relationships created by the School's people, place, and opportunities—is its most effective means of providing a transformative educational experience, where students may grow and gain greater understanding of themselves and their responsibilities to others. The School believes that a healthy and inclusive learning community nourishes students physically, emotionally, and intellectually; fosters joy in learning and living with others; and ensures that all feel safe, seen, and supported. All members of the Hotchkiss community have a role in sustaining this environment.

Position:

Chief Communications Officer

Reports to:

Anne Bruder
Head of School

Opportunity Proposition:

As the next Chief Communications Officer, you will join Hotchkiss at a pivotal moment in the School's history, with an opportunity to celebrate the successful completion of a major campaign, support the arrival of a new Head of School, and lead a comprehensive assessment of the School's communications strategy, brand positioning, and storytelling approach to ensure Hotchkiss continues to distinguish itself among the nation's leading independent schools.

Principal Responsibility:

Through the leadership of the Chief Communications Officer, the Communications team will develop and execute an integrated communications and storytelling strategy that strengthens Hotchkiss's reputation, advances institutional priorities, and deepens engagement among prospective and current students, families, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, and other key constituents. Reporting to the Head of School, the Chief Communications Officer will lead a comprehensive assessment of the School's internal and external communications landscape, clarify and elevate the institution's brand narrative, establish greater consistency across messaging and visual identity, and position Communications as a trusted strategic partner across the School.

Specific Duties:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the School's internal and external communications ecosystem during the first year, evaluating brand, messaging, channels, workflows, audience segmentation, and stakeholder relationships to identify opportunities for greater effectiveness and alignment.
- Develop and implement an institution-wide content strategy that ensures the School's most compelling stories, differentiators, and strategic priorities are communicated consistently across all platforms and audiences.
- Support the Head of School in her role as chief spokesperson for Hotchkiss, serving as a co-strategist on messaging. Ensure that she is well-briefed and that her communications activities are productive and efficient.
- Establish and champion clear brand standards, messaging frameworks, and visual identity guidelines, fostering greater consistency and discipline across all School communications.
- Play a hands-on role in the development, launch, and ongoing evolution of the School's website and digital ecosystem, including social media, email, video, and emerging platforms. Ensure strategic alignment and executional excellence across all channels.
- Partner with Admissions team to ensure coordinated, timely, strategic, and compelling recruitment marketing and messages to support enrollment.
- Collaborate with the Alumni and Development team on alumni and donor engagement, including communications surrounding the conclusion of the Ever Forward campaign.
- Provide leadership, coaching, and active management for an integrated communications and marketing team, setting clear direction and priorities while overseeing a comprehensive, multichannel program that serves all constituencies. Assess the team's structure and capabilities and continue to build a proactive, high-performing culture defined by collaboration and responsiveness.

Professional and Personal Profile:

- Proven experience envisioning, developing, and implementing a comprehensive brand communications program across an enterprise with multiple constituencies and a variety of audiences (independent school or higher education experience a plus).
- Superior strategic thinking skills with a strong grasp of industry best practices and a holistic understanding of all aspects of communications, positioning, and messaging (exposure to admissions, fundraising, and alumni relations, also a plus). Substantial experience evaluating the strengths of existing communications and identifying opportunities for improvement.

- Broad experience in strategic integrated communications including some exposure to media relations and crisis management.
- Proven success in managing and supporting an integrated communications and marketing unit is essential, with experience identifying and assessing talent, and developing teams to support overall goals and objectives.
- Keen creative and design sensibilities, with a strong understanding of the communications process from creative concept through production and fulfillment.
- Fluency across traditional and emerging communications channels, including digital platforms, social media, and AI-driven tools with a sophisticated understanding of how to deploy each to reach and engage diverse audiences.
- Excellent writing skills and the demonstrated ability to craft substantive and cohesive messages based on strategic priorities, communicate successfully to key audiences, and adapt and adjust as appropriate over time.
- Experience working in a complex, matrixed environment serving many internal clients and external constituents. Ability to build relationships and collaborate across the institution, serving as a resource to others and obtaining their input, while remaining persuasive, persistent, and determined.
- Collaborative and collegial orientation, eager and able to engage a diverse client base, and able to build strong professional relationships. A convener who is able to synthesize many ideas and produce excellent work about a wide range of diverse topics.
- Superlative interpersonal skills with a demonstrated ability to work well with people at all levels of an organization. Strong personal integrity and work ethic, as well as a sense of humor and perspective.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.

The Hotchkiss School is an equal-opportunity employer and is committed to basing judgments concerning the employment of individuals upon their qualifications and abilities. The School is firmly committed to equal employment and advancement opportunities for all employees and applicants in all phases of the employment process (including recruitment, hiring, assignment, terms and conditions of employment, compensation, benefits, training, promotion, transfer, discipline and termination).

In accordance with applicable law, the School does not discriminate against any individual based on age, ancestry, color, genetic information, learning disability, marital status, past or present history of mental disability, national origin, physical disability, race, religious creed, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic.

The Hotchkiss School has retained the Executive Search Firm, The Ward Group, to lead the search efforts. Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to: info@wardgroup.com and reference "Hotchkiss" in the subject line.