Vice President for Marketing and Communications

Leadership Profile

May 2026

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved. This document contains proprietary and confidential information belonging to WittKieffer. It is intended only for the addressee. Any unauthorized disclosure, copying, or distribution is strictly prohibited without written consent.

Executive Summary

Florida State University (FSU) seeks an accomplished, forward-looking leader to serve as its inaugural Vice President for Marketing and Communications (VPMC), a newly established, cabinet-level role reporting directly to the President. This appointment reflects the University's continued evolution as a leading public research institution and underscores a strategic commitment to strengthening enterprise-level marketing, communications, brand stewardship, and reputation management.

The Vice President for Marketing and Communications will serve as FSU's senior leader for institutional narrative, positioning, and engagement, bringing cohesion, clarity, and strategic direction to a broad and distributed marketing and communications enterprise. As a trusted advisor to the President and senior leadership, the VPMC will help shape how the University articulates its mission, priorities, and impact to internal and external audiences at the local, state, national, and global levels. This role offers a rare opportunity to influence the University's trajectory at a moment of momentum, ambition, and growing visibility.

Florida State University is one of the nation's preeminent public research universities, with rising academic and research distinction, strong enrollment demand, and an increasingly prominent role in advancing discovery, health, innovation, and public service. Located in the state capital, the University occupies a unique position at the intersection of higher education, public policy, and civic leadership. Recent developments, including significant research growth, expanding health initiatives, rising national rankings, and the quiet phase of a major comprehensive campaign, underscore Florida State's aspiration to more clearly and confidently convey its distinctive strengths and contributions.

The VPMC will be charged with advancing a cohesive, integrated, and future-focused marketing and communications strategy that aligns the University's many voices around shared priorities and a compelling institutional narrative. Success will require a leader who can unify people and messaging across a complex, decentralized environment; guide strategic change with credibility and care; and elevate the role of marketing and communications as essential partners in achieving institutional goals. The Vice President will foster collaboration across colleges, divisions, and campuses while establishing shared frameworks, standards, and expectations that enhance consistency, effectiveness, and impact.

Florida State University seeks a leader who brings deep respect for the University's educational mission and public responsibilities, along with the political and cultural fluency required to operate effectively within a large public institution. The successful candidate will be a gifted strategist, a confident and empathetic leader of people, and a disciplined decision-maker who values listening, data, and thoughtful execution. The VPMC must command trust through judgment and influence, balancing bold vision with stewardship, and innovation with institutional context.

This role presents a compelling opportunity for a senior marketing and communications executive to help define how Florida State University is understood and experienced by its community, its partners, and the broader public during a defining period in the University's history.

To apply, submit a nomination, or express personal interest in this position, please see the procedure for candidacy at the end of this document.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Florida State University Marketing and Communications

Florida State University operates with a hybrid communications and marketing model that combines centralized coordination at the institution level with decentralized offices within colleges, centers, and specialized units.

The University Communications and Marketing Offices serve as the primary hub for official news, media relations, crisis and emergency communication, executive messaging, brand standards, core web properties, and governance of primary social media channels—ensuring consistency, reliability, and alignment with university priorities. This centralized infrastructure is supported by Information Technology Services, which is consolidating IT staff, standardizing security, and establishing campus-wide communication standards for voice, video, and digital platforms.

In contrast, decentralized communications and marketing offices allow individual units to manage their own campaigns, messaging, and brand engagement while leveraging centrally supported tools for branded, data-driven email and SMS outreach. Shared analytics platforms empower distributed teams to innovate and act on data independently, creating a model that balances strong institutional coherence with flexibility, specialization, and speed in execution.

The VPMC will coordinate with more than 80 university communications liaisons and several hundred marketing and communications professionals throughout the institution.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The Vice President for Marketing and Communications will assume leadership at a moment of considerable opportunity for Florida State University. The institution's scale, momentum, and ambition create a compelling context for a senior leader who can elevate marketing and communications as strategic, enterprise-wide functions that advance institutional priorities and strengthen the University's reputation.

Build and Drive an Enterprise-Wide Marketing and Communications Strategy

- The Vice President for Marketing and Communications will develop and lead a comprehensive, audience-centric marketing and communications strategy aligned with Florida State University's mission, strategic priorities, and presidential vision. This strategy will translate institutional goals into a cohesive, enterprise-wide narrative that connects academic excellence, research growth, student success, health initiatives, and community impact. The VPMC will utilize a data-driven approach to establish clarity around priority per audiences, objectives, and outcomes to guide decision-making, resource allocation, and the sequencing of high-impact initiatives, while serving as a strategic advisor to the President and senior leadership on issues of reputation, positioning, and communications risk and opportunity.

Advance a Proactive, Brand-Forward Reputation Strategy

- The VPMC will lead a proactive and disciplined approach to reputation management that strengthens Florida State's visibility, differentiation, and long-term brand equity. This includes elevating under-told stories—such as research breakthroughs, faculty excellence, health and innovation initiatives, and societal impact—to audiences that matter most at the state, national, and global levels. The VPMC will ensure that marketing and communications reinforce a clear and authentic brand position, balancing immediate institutional priorities with sustained reputation-building, and will define and track key brand and reputation metrics to inform strategy and measure impact.

Align and Strengthen the Central Marketing and Communications Organization

- A critical responsibility of the VPMC will be to design and lead a modern, integrated marketing and communications organization aligned with institutional strategy. This includes clarifying roles, decision rights, workflows, and accountability; establishing governance, standards, and shared tools; and strengthening the central team's ability to support alignment across a decentralized campus. The VPMC will cultivate a strong service orientation and a culture of excellence within the central organization, while investing in professional development, coaching, and strategic hiring to ensure capabilities in storytelling, digital engagement, analytics, issues management, and executive communications.

Lead a Cohesive Brand Platform and University-Wide Storytelling Framework

- The VPMC will oversee a data-driven evaluation and refinement of Florida State's enterprise brand framework, ensuring that positioning, value proposition, and messaging architecture provide a clear and differentiating foundation for all communications and marketing efforts. The VPMC will develop a unifying institutional narrative that is authentic to Florida State and adaptable across audiences and disciplines and will equip communicators across campus with shared messaging frameworks, brand guidance, and story tools. In doing so, the VPMC will establish repeatable processes for identifying, prioritizing, and distributing high-value stories across paid, earned, owned, and shared channels.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Modernize Digital, Social, and Marketing Infrastructure

- The VPMC will lead the continued evolution of Florida State's digital and marketing ecosystem, including web strategy, social media, marketing technology, analytics platforms, and content management tools. This work will strengthen audience segmentation, personalization, and lifecycle communications—from prospective students to alumni and donors—while reducing fragmentation and inefficiency. The VPMC will ensure digital accessibility, usability, search optimization, and readiness for emerging technologies, including AI-enabled discovery and engagement, and will bring coherence and discipline to paid media, email, and mass communications.

Elevate Internal Communications as a Strategic Capability

- The VPMC will develop and lead an internal communications strategy that supports transparency, alignment, and engagement among faculty, staff, and students. Internal communications will be positioned as a strategic function that helps the campus community understand institutional priorities, navigate change, and feel connected to Florida State's mission and direction. The VPMC will ensure messaging is timely, coordinated, and tailored to different internal audiences, using channels and formats aligned with evolving expectations and behaviors.

Strengthen Partnerships Across the University and Beyond

- The VPMC will build strong, trust-based partnerships with communicators and marketers across colleges, divisions, athletics, advancement, research, and health initiatives. This includes establishing effective structures for collaboration and co-creation, aligning central and embedded communicators through clear guidance and two-way communication, and supporting advancement leadership during the comprehensive campaign. The VPMC will also represent Florida State effectively with external partners, agencies, media, and stakeholders, navigating the public and political context with discretion, credibility, and sound judgment.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Reporting to the President, the Vice President for Marketing and Communications (VPMC) is a cabinet-level leader who serves as Florida State University's senior strategist and steward for the institutional brand, reputation, and enterprise marketing and communications. The VPMC provides strategic counsel to the President and senior leadership on brand positioning, messaging, and reputational risk and opportunity, and leads a university-wide marketing and communications enterprise comprising approximately 50 professionals. This role requires sound judgment, credibility, and a collaborative leadership approach to align and guide a broad, decentralized network of communicators and marketers in support of the University's strategic priorities.

Required Qualifications

- A Master's degree with a minimum of eight (8) years of progressively responsible experience in marketing, communications, brand management, or a related field; or a Bachelor's degree with a minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible experience.
- Demonstrated success leading complex, enterprise-level marketing and communications initiatives, preferably within large, matrixed organizations.
- Proven ability to lead integrated marketing and communications strategies across multiple channels, including brand, media relations, executive communications, digital platforms, and analytics.
- Experience providing strategic counsel to senior leadership on institutional narrative, reputation, and communications risk and opportunity, including during high-impact or high-visibility situations.
- Demonstrated leadership experience in organizational design, team development, performance management, and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.
- Experience managing budgets, stewarding resources, and overseeing relationships with external partners, agencies, and vendors.
- Exceptional written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to translate complex institutional priorities into clear, compelling messaging for diverse audiences.

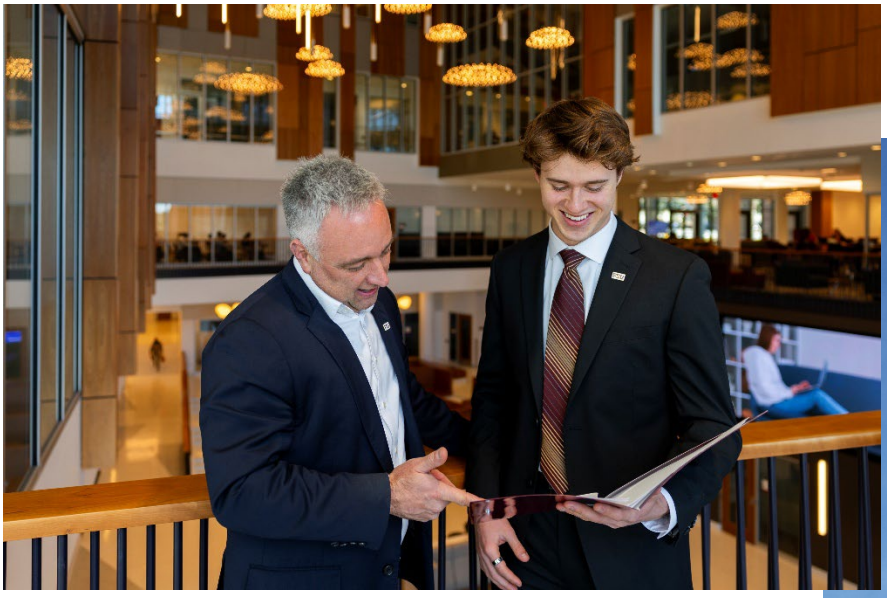
Preferred Qualifications

- Significant experience within higher education, the public sector, or similarly complex mission-driven organizations, with an understanding of shared governance, public accountability, and political context.
- Demonstrated success leading marketing and communications within decentralized or distributed environments, aligning multiple stakeholders without relying on direct authority.
- Experience stewarding or evolving an enterprise brand, including positioning, visual identity, messaging frameworks, and storytelling systems.
- Proven results using data, analytics, and audience research to inform strategy, prioritize initiatives, and measure impact.
- Experience overseeing digital strategy and innovation, including web platforms, social media, multimedia storytelling, and technology-enabled communications.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Personal Qualities

- **Unifying leader:** Brings people together across colleges, divisions, and disciplines, aligning diverse perspectives around shared goals, standards, and institutional purpose.
- **Strategic and forward-thinking:** Anticipates challenges and opportunities, connects vision to execution, and balances immediate priorities with long-term brand and reputation stewardship.
- **Credible institutional steward:** Demonstrates deep respect for Florida State University's mission, culture, and public responsibilities, earning trust through judgment and consistency rather than mandate.
- **Confident decision-maker:** Willing to make clear, sometimes difficult decisions; communicates rationale transparently; and moves the organization forward with purpose and accountability.
- **Resourceful builder:** Thinks expansively about capacity and resources, leveraging partnerships, tools, talent, and external expertise to maximize institutional impact.
- **Data-informed leader:** Values evidence and insight, establishing goals and measures that guide prioritization, learning, and continuous improvement.
- **Engaged listener:** Approaches leadership with curiosity and humility, listening carefully before acting and integrating diverse perspectives into decision-making.
- **Calm, trusted presence:** Communicates with clarity, composure, and authenticity, inspiring confidence among senior leaders, campus partners, and external stakeholders.



© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

About Florida State University

As one of the nation's elite research universities and one of the largest of the 12 institutions of higher learning in the State University System of Florida, FSU offers a distinctive academic environment built on its cherished values and unique heritage. With over 46,000 students, over 16,000 employees, and an operating budget of $2.32 billion, FSU provides a welcoming campus environment on the oldest continuous site of higher education in Florida, with a prime location in the heart of the state capital. *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Florida State University as #21 among all public universities in the nation. Underlying the educational experience at FSU is the development of new generations of citizen leaders, grounded in the concepts inscribed on the University's seal: Vires, Artes, Mores — Strength, Skill, and Character.

Combining traditional strengths in the arts and humanities with internationally recognized leadership in the sciences, FSU provides unmatched opportunities for students and faculty through challenging academics, cultural discovery, and community interaction. FSU's 17 colleges offer more than 274 undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, specialist, and professional degree programs, including medicine and law. The University awards over 4,000 graduate and professional degrees each year. With an impressive breadth of leading graduate, professional, and undergraduate programs, FSU is a demanding, intellectually stimulating, yet warm and caring environment for students and faculty. The University also has over 65 years of experience in international education and is a leader in the field of study-abroad programs, consistently ranking among the top public universities in the nation for "long-term duration" experiences through its permanent study centers in London, Florence, Valencia, Panama City, Panama, and summer-specific programs in various locations around the world.

FSU's arts programs — performing and fine/visual arts, design, and education — rank among the finest in the world, offering an arts education comparable to leading conservatories. The creative writing program is home to the most consistently honored and published student body in the country. FSU also operates the Ringling Center for the Cultural Arts in Sarasota, which includes the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the largest museum/university complex in the nation, and home to the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, which houses the Asolo Repertory Theatre.

Other programs consistently included in the top public university rankings include physics, chemistry, political science, psychology, criminology, public administration, library science, human sciences, business, education, social work, nursing, economics, and law. At the Ph.D. level, interdisciplinary programs draw on notable research faculty strengths that transcend the traditional disciplines, including neuroscience, molecular biophysics, computational science, materials science, and research at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory — home to some of the world's most powerful magnets. More than 1,000 scientists from around the globe utilize the magnet lab each year to conduct their research.

The student experience is also highly ranked, placing in the top 10 of public universities for best first-year experience, best student life, and Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) programs, as well as top 25 for best public universities for veterans.

Throughout its rich history, FSU has grown its academic organization and expanded from the original site and modest beginnings of Bryan Hall (1908) and Westcott Building (1909) to more than 400 buildings spanning over 1,600 acres with multiple campus locations in Florida and abroad. FSU's Main Campus includes an assemblage of over 485 acres. The Main Campus is complemented locally by a 73-acre FSU Lakefront Park & Retreat Center, over 200 acres in Innovation Park (home of the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory), and the South Campus which is home to the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering, the Nicklaus-designed Seminole Legacy Golf course, and multiple other sports and athletic venues. Beyond Tallahassee, FSU Panama City is a 28-acre campus serving over 4,000 students. FSU has a presence along the Gulf Coast at the Marine Laboratory, in Sarasota at the Ringling Museum, and satellite locations in Pensacola, Palm Beach, Marianna, and others. FSU's academic impact is experienced globally with study centers in Florence, Italy; London, England; Valencia, Spain; and Panama City, Panama.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

FSU has received the Carnegie Foundation's highest designation (Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity, R1) and receives more in National Science Foundation funding than any other university in the state. FSU also produces exceptional scholarship from highly ranked programs in the humanities and performing and fine/visual arts and each year attracts world-class exhibitions and performers to Tallahassee. FSU faculty includes members of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Medicine, the National Academy of Inventors, and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences; Pulitzer Prize winners; Oscar winners; and Guggenheim, Fulbright, and National Endowment for the Humanities fellows. Six Nobel laureates have been associated with FSU.

Florida State University's athletics program is one of the nation's most prominent and successful collegiate sports organizations. It operates within NCAA Division I and is a long-standing member of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). Seminole athletics is recognized as one of the nation's top all-around programs, having finished 13 of the last 14 seasons ranked among the 20 best programs in the country, including 12 among the top 15. Within the last few years, FSU has played for the national title in women's soccer, men's golf, softball, and beach volleyball, and the program has won 17 National Championships in its history.

Additional information about FSU, its history and programs can be found at http://www.fsu.edu

Leadership

President Richard McCullough

Richard McCullough became the 16th president of Florida State University in August 2021, bringing more than three decades of academic leadership experience to the role. During his tenure, he has strengthened FSU's foundation as one of the nation's top public universities by investing in student and faculty success as well as academic and research excellence.

Before joining FSU, McCullough served as vice provost for research for 10 years and professor of materials science and engineering at Harvard University. He previously spent 22 years at Carnegie Mellon University, where he began his academic career as an assistant professor of chemistry and rose through the ranks to become the Thomas Lord Professor of Chemistry. He also served as the head of chemistry, the dean of science and vice president for research.

McCullough has more than 110 publications, holds 16 U.S. patents, and is an entrepreneur who started two companies. He is a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors and was inducted into the Advanced Materials Journal Hall of Fame in 2021, and the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame and the Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine of Florida, both in 2025. He is the recipient of the Carnegie Science Center Award for Excellence as a Start-Up Entrepreneur.

He earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Texas at Dallas and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Johns Hopkins University, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Tallahassee

Tallahassee is a distinctive capital city defined by education, public institutions, and a high quality of life. As Florida's seat of government and home to Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and Tallahassee State College, the city brings together higher education, healthcare, and statewide organizations in a collaborative and accessible environment. Its role as the capital provides proximity to state agencies, academic institutions, and cross-sector partners, creating opportunities for meaningful partnership and applied impact while maintaining the collegial atmosphere of a university-centered community.

Cultural life in Tallahassee reflects both heritage and momentum. The Florida Historic Capitol Museum and the modern State Capitol complex stand as architectural markers of the city's evolution, while destinations such as the Challenger Learning Center, Railroad Square Art District, and a growing array of galleries and performance venues contribute to a vibrant creative scene. Midtown and downtown districts continue to expand with locally owned restaurants, cafés, and gathering spaces that foster connection and community.

Unlike many Florida cities, Tallahassee is distinguished by its natural landscape. Rolling hills, live oaks draped in Spanish moss, and scenic canopy roads lend the city a character more reminiscent of the Southeast's historic college towns than coastal resort communities. Residents enjoy extensive parks and trails, including Cascades Park, Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, and the St. Marks Trail, along with convenient access to freshwater springs and the Gulf Coast. Tallahassee International Airport provides regional connectivity while preserving the ease and livability of a mid-sized city.

With a population of approximately 200,000 and a metropolitan region approaching 400,000, Tallahassee offers the resources of a capital city within a setting that remains navigable, affordable, and community-oriented. The partnership between Florida State University and the broader Tallahassee region supports innovation in research, healthcare, the arts, and economic development. Leaders who choose Tallahassee will find a community that values academic excellence, thoughtful growth, and collaborative progress in an environment that balances professional opportunity with personal quality of life.

To learn more about Tallahassee, Florida, click here.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Florida State University in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by June 8, 2026.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's **candidate portal**.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to: Jeff Compher, Melissa Fincher, and Jenna Brumleve at

FSUVPMarCom@wittkieffer.com

This position requires successful completion of a criminal history background check.

This position requires annual Financial Disclosure based on Florida Statutes 112.3144 and 112.3145.

FSU is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Florida's "Sunshine Law" requires that all search committee business be open to public review.

© WittKieffer. All rights reserved