Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer

Wayne State University

Confidential Position Specification

2023
Table of Contents

About Wayne State 3
The Opportunity 5
The Candidate 8
About Wayne State

Founded in 1868, Wayne State is Michigan’s only urban public research university, holding Carnegie classification as an R1, doctoral-granting university with very high research activity as well as its Community Engagement classification. It has also received the Association of Public and Land-Grant University’s designation as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University. With a broad array of approximately 350 academic programs delivered by expert faculty second, the university is the third-largest among Michigan’s 15 public universities. As Detroit’s seventh-largest employer, Wayne State has 2,269 faculty members (1,448 full time), nearly 5,000 regular staff and more than 2,000 student employees.

Located in the heart of Detroit, Wayne State serves 23,702 students. A picture of diversity, 16% of its students identify as Black/African American, 7% as Hispanic or Latino, 10% as Middle Eastern/N. African and 15% Asian. As Michigan’s most diverse public university, Wayne State stands out as an institution of access and opportunity for students from all backgrounds. Notably, 40% of its undergraduate population are first-generation college students and nearly half are Pell-eligible. Third Way rankings identified Wayne State being in its Top Tier for social mobility.

Wayne State is focused on serving the Detroit region and the state of Michigan in its reinvention of the 21st century economy. Eighty percent of our alumni stay in Michigan, allowing us to serve as a talent pipeline for the region and drive the state economy. Because of our excellence, we also attract students from across the United States and beyond. The current student body includes foreign students from 80 different counties. The university’s global engagement effort has led to partnerships with institutions in the Middle East, Latin America, Korea, India, and China.

Wayne State serves a prominent role in furthering knowledge and conducting research with a community impact. In particular, WSU total research expenditures for the last year exceeded $240M, and the university is known for faculty research in chemistry, physics, biomedical and health sciences, mobility and automotive safety, neurosciences, alternative/sustainable energy, and nanoscience. Together, Wayne State, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University form the University Research Corridor, the only national innovation cluster composed exclusively of public institutions.

Wayne State’s 200-acre campus lies at the heart of Midtown, a cultural and historic district in Detroit, and remains a steadfast partner in the city’s economic life.
The university comprises the following 13 schools and colleges: College of Education; College of Engineering; College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts; Graduate School; Law School; College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; the Mike Ilitch School of Business; School of Information Sciences; Irvin D. Reid Honors College; School of Social Work; School of Medicine; College of Nursing; and the Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

**President Espy**
Kimberly Andrews Espy, Ph.D., is the 13th president of Wayne State University.

A leader with more than 25 years of experience in higher education, President Espy previously served as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), where she championed social and economic opportunity by promoting affordable access to a top-quality research university education.

During her tenure, UTSA earned the distinction of an R1 classification by the Carnegie Foundation and was invited to join the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Universities after earning the Seal of Excelencia from Excelencia in Education for its commitment to serving Hispanic students — and, by extension, all students. As UTSA’s provost, she strived to advance social mobility through improved student learning, which she strengthened through a strong focus on the recruitment and retention of outstanding diverse faculty who are leaders in their disciplines.

Prior to serving as UTSA’s provost, President Espy was senior vice president for research at the University of Arizona, where research and development awards increased to record levels. Focusing on strategic external partnerships, she was a member of the leadership team that established the historic academic partnership with Banner Health and worked with industry and government partners to stand up the Defense Security Research Institute, which supported mission-focused applications.

President Espy is an elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her work has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 2002, and she has earned more than $22 million in funding to study how young children control their attention to promote later learning, mental health, and health outcomes, and how it is affected by medical, social, and environmental factors.

Since her arrival in August, she has embraced Wayne’s urban serving, public research university mission, and has actively engaged students, faculty, staff, community, alumni, and governmental stakeholders. In November, she launched the College to Career initiative, which aims to expand Wayne State’s approach to student success by intentionally connecting with industry, small business, community, service and governmental employers to advance marketable skill development for career preparation that will fuel Detroit’s talent pipeline and advance social and economic mobility for all students, advance the health and well-being of local families, and promote regional innovation and business competitiveness.
The Opportunity

**Position**  
Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer

**Location:**  
Detroit, MI

**Reporting Relationship:**  
Reports to the President

**Website:**  
https://wayne.edu/

The Opportunity

The Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer will arrive during a time of great university momentum, with new leadership and strategic priorities. The Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer role will be a unifying one that works across university groups and external constituents to synergize and propel Wayne State’s impact and success.

This role will focus on creating cohesive strategy for working with university and governmental affairs, strategic communication, and public relations, and must possess a deep appreciation for the planning process as well as local political acumen and be highly collaborative.

The role will also have the ability to collect and synthesize voices, crystalize ambiguity and organize systems and processes to implement thoughts, ideas, and new strategic initiatives. The role requires combining the craft, knowledge, and needs of the university ecosystem with the demonstrated ability to pull together different entities.

Position Overview

Reporting directly to the President, the Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer will function as an advisor and strategic partner to the Wayne State University President and the university leadership. The position will lead, oversee, and coordinate the President’s external initiatives, strategic messaging, institutional advocacy, events, and special projects and work with the administrative staff and leaders in the President’s office, as well as the executive and academic leaders, to accomplish these objectives.

This position serves as a key liaison for the President with external stakeholders and across the institution. The Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer may represent the President in a variety of formal and informal settings. As the leader of the division of University Relations, this position will lead, direct, and oversee Government and Community Affairs, Marketing and Communications, and the Board of Governors office.
Essential Functions

Coordination of External Advocacy to Procure Greater Support

▪ Directs and oversees high-level external advocacy initiatives, projects and events initiated by the President and communicates progress to the President, other executives, and leadership team.

▪ Leads and plans projects. Monitors and implements advocacy initiatives including, but not limited to, strategic planning, communication, engagement, campus events and community sponsorships and events to advance the university’s position and resources.

▪ Works closely with other campus leaders, board members, key stakeholders, government officials, and the President to plan, oversee, manage, and coordinate external advocacy activities, initiatives, and events requiring the President’s involvement.

▪ Develops action plans, oversees preparation, and coordinates timely distribution of materials.

▪ Assists and prepares the President by facilitating effective external relations. Coordinates support, as needed, within the executive team for implementation of the President’s priorities.

▪ Coordinates with campus leaders on providing regular reports/data to the President and the board on the progress of completing strategic external advocacy initiatives.

▪ Travels with the President to meetings, conferences, and dedicated events as required.

Coordination of Marketing and Communications to Influence More Stakeholders

▪ Provides the President with strategic advice on marketing and communications, leads plans, and coordinates actions to advance university positions, strategic messaging, institutional branding, and positively influence stakeholders.

▪ Directs and oversees high-level external university communications and marketing initiated by the President and communicates progress to the President, other executives, and leadership teams.

▪ Leads the high-level project conceptualization, monitoring, and oversight of implementation of initiatives including, but not limited to, strategic planning; stakeholder engagement; and related efforts to advance the university’s position, reach, influence, and resources.

▪ Works closely with campus leaders, board members, key stakeholders, government officials, and the President to plan, oversee, manage, and coordinate communications activities, initiatives, and events requiring the President’s involvement.

▪ Coordinates with campus leaders on providing regular reports/data to the President and the board on the progress of completing strategic communication initiatives.

Coordination of Presidential Response on Critical and/or Sensitive Matters

▪ Provides the President with strategic advice, apprises on significant issues, and identifies approaches to resolve issues. Briefs the President in advance of meetings and events.

▪ Leads high-level or sensitive concerns and requests on behalf of the President. Works with the President and the board as required.

▪ Creates and maintains a plan to cascade communications when representing the executive team on projects and in meetings; strives to keep the President and the executive team informed.

▪ Coordinates external communications with the media and related outlets and serves as the presidential communications leader (both written and oral presentations).

▪ Oversees the Crisis Management Team and works closely with campus leaders to resolve issues and develop and/or revise policies and procedures as appropriate.
Coordination of Positive, Supportive Relationships with Key Constituents, including the Board of Governors

- Establishes, nurtures, and sustains strong and highly collaborative relationships across the university and external community/constituents.
- Participates in key constituent meetings to guide strategy and policy to ensure appropriate responsive follow-up and accountability, facilitates resolution of matters requiring the President's attention.
- Oversees and coordinates Board oversight and engagement.

Key Member of the University Executive Team

- As Chief of Staff, serves as an integral member of the Office of the President working closely with the Assistant Vice President of Operations and Strategic Initiatives to coordinate certain activities and provide leadership, where needed, to the executive and administrative support staff within Office of the President.
- Makes prudent budgetary and personnel decisions and thoughtfully exercises full authority over divisional organization and activities to accomplish university goals established with the President.
- In the absence of the AVP of Operations and Strategic Initiatives, approves expenditures and ensures compliance with university and regulatory policies and procedures in an administrative leadership capacity.

Other duties as assigned
The Candidate

Experience and Professional Qualifications

The Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer role will require a committed external focus and engagement to help create cohesive strategy through strategic communications, marketing, and storytelling to fill a needed leadership capacity and help to unify and connect.

To perform the job successfully, the Chief of Staff and University Relations Officer should demonstrate the following skills, experiences, and competencies:

Experience

- 7+ years of professional, senior-level experience in or impacting a large, complex, organizational, governmental, or corporate headquarters.
- Established subject matter/content area expertise.
- Responsibility for driving key projects and initiatives with significant impact across the organization.
- Substantial work experience with the organization's chief executive and senior management team.
- Experience providing senior executive-level advancement within a large, complex, organizational, governmental, or corporate headquarters.
- Familiarity with higher education and/or governmental issues preferred.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Strong strategic and analytical skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with a strong ability to influence people and decisions.
- Ability to manage multiple high-priority projects within specified deadlines in a fast-paced, high-growth environment.
- Ability to perform in a collaborative, dynamic, fast-paced, high-growth, team-based environment.
- High degree of integrity, confidentiality, and a strong ability to work with a wide range of individuals in a diverse community.
- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ability to lead effectively within a non-hierarchical, de-centralized, and highly collaborative campus community.
- Skill in working with all campus stakeholders in a climate of openness and transparency, integrity, trust, mutual respect, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Outstanding oral and written communications skills, with an ability to speak to a variety of audiences, transform ambiguity into clarity, and articulate campus needs with persuasiveness and conviction.
- Excellent listening skills and the capacity and willingness to engage in intellectual debate and discussion.
- Ability to evaluate effectiveness of various media, including social media, websites, and information provided through digital materials.
- Awareness and understanding of the role of shared governance and unionized faculty and staff in university life.
Working Conditions
▪ Dynamic office environment.
▪ Evening and weekend hours required based on business needs.

Education
Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in business administration, public policy, public relations, communications, political science, law, or related field. Master’s degree preferred.

Compensation
Compensation and benefits will be competitive and commensurate with experience.

Application Process
Interested and qualified candidates are welcome to submit a cover letter and resume to: WSUCHiefofStaff@kornferry.com.
Brendan Gallagher
Managing Consultant, Nonprofit & Higher Ed
M. 215.656.5342
E. Brendan.Gallagher@KornFerry.com

Stephen Black
Senior Associate, Nonprofit & Higher Ed
M. 610.212.9143
E. Stephen.Black@kornferry.com