Vice President for Marketing and Strategic Communication

Position Description
Vice President for Marketing and Strategic Communication

Western Michigan University (WMU) is seeking a visionary leader to serve as vice president for marketing and strategic communication (VPMSC). The VPMSC will lead the Office of University Relations and provide vision and leadership for executing university-wide marketing and strategic communication, including public relations and brand strategy. The VPMSC reports to the president and is a member of the president's cabinet, which is the university's senior leadership team. The VPMSC will work collaboratively with all university entities to fully integrate and advance institutional marketing, branding and communication efforts, both internally and externally. The VPMSC will collaborate particularly closely with the leadership of other externally facing offices, including the Enrollment Management, Extended University Programs, Development and Alumni Relations, and Intercollegiate Athletics.

A primary goal for the VPMSC is to help Western Michigan University realize its strategic goals by advancing an enhanced image of the university regionally, nationally, and beyond, as a university of choice. The successful result of these efforts will contribute to: increasing the diversity, quality, and quantity of WMU’s undergraduate and graduate populations; strengthening its national rankings; raising the visibility of Western Michigan and the accomplishments of its students, faculty and staff; building alumni engagement and promoting employee engagement; and enhancing public awareness of the university as a vital resource locally, regionally, and nationally.
About Western Michigan University

Founded in 1903, WMU is a learner-centered, discovery-driven, and globally engaged research institution with an enrollment of over 23,000, of whom nearly 5,000 are pursuing graduate degrees. Classified as a “higher research” university by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, WMU offers more than 250 degree programs, including 31 at the doctoral level. Many of its degree programs enjoy national and international recognition. Committed to diversity in all its forms, the University attracts students from a rich variety of backgrounds and identities representing every state in the union and 100 nations around the world.

Nearly 900 WMU Board-appointed faculty members have studied and earned degrees at many of the world’s leading universities. They engage in teaching, research, creative activity, and service primarily on the main campus in Kalamazoo and at 18 locations throughout the nation and around the world. Additionally, WMU has a substantial online presence through its Extended University Programs division, and a wealth of articulation agreements with other institutions and international partnerships.

In 2014, in partnership with the community and two local teaching hospitals, WMU launched a private medical school, the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. WMU also recently announced a formal affiliation with one of the nation’s largest and most diverse law schools, renamed the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

WMU is one of only 103 public institutions with a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. For 26 consecutive years, U.S. News & World Report has listed Western Michigan University among that publication’s top national universities. Military Times EDGE magazine ranks WMU among the best U.S. institutions for military veterans, the only Michigan school to appear on its annual Best for Vets list all seven years of the list’s existence. WMU regularly appears on Washington Monthly’s annual list of Top 100 National Universities, a designation that recognizes contributions to the public good. In addition, the University has been recognized nationally for its many award-winning sustainability programs and its environmental leadership.

The faculty and staff of Western Michigan University are committed to fostering a learning environment that is rigorous, supportive, and inclusive. International students comprise eight percent of WMU’s diverse student body; students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups comprise 21 percent. A wide range of resources and services for students focus on academic and career success, with several dedicated to meeting the needs of such select groups as first-year students, transfer students, and military veterans. One of WMU’s signature initiatives, the Seita Scholars program, provides scholarships to students who have aged out of the foster care system.
WMU students enjoy a vibrant campus atmosphere featuring nearly 400 student organizations, including an active student government, academic clubs and honor societies, student chapters of professional associations, fraternities and sororities, club sports teams, faith-based groups, and a variety of other interest groups.

**Mission**
Western Michigan University is a learner-centered research university, building intellectual inquiry and discovery into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a way that fosters knowledge and innovation, and transforms wisdom into action. As a public university, WMU provides leadership in teaching, research, learning, and service, and is committed to enhancing the future of the global citizenry.

**Vision**
Nationally and internationally recognized, the university aspires to distinguish itself as learner centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged.

**Learner centered**
Western Michigan University is a university where every member of the community is responsive to and responsible for the education of students. Western Michigan University challenges and engages all members of the community with a university experience that creates skilled, life-long learners.

**Discovery driven**
Western Michigan University offers experiences that enable discovery, and promote creativity and research. The university is committed to pursuing inquiry, disseminating knowledge, and fostering critical thinking that encourages life-long learning. University scholarship creates new knowledge, forms a basis for innovative solutions, leads to economic development, and makes substantial contributions to society.

**Globally engaged**
Western Michigan University impacts the globe positively. The university is a community of learners committed to human dignity, sustainability, social responsibility, and justice. The campus embraces a diverse population of students, faculty and staff who develop learners and leaders who are locally oriented and globally competent, culturally aware and ready to contribute to world knowledge and discovery.

The synergy of these three pillars enables WMU to be a premier and distinctive university of choice. Western Michigan University offers all students a learning community designed for and dedicated to their success. The university is committed to access and affordability, and sustaining an environment in which every student can meet the world head-on and triumph.
Points of Pride

Stature and Value

- **The Carnegie Foundation** classifies WMU as one of 157 public research universities conducting research at the “higher” or “highest” levels.

- **U.S. News & World Report** has designated WMU a top national university for 27 consecutive years and has placed it in the top-tier of those universities since 2011.

- **Phi Beta Kappa**, America’s most prestigious honor society, grants chapters to WMU and just 102 other public colleges and universities.

- **Business Insider** named WMU Michigan’s most-affordable highly ranked university in 2017.

- **Washington Monthly** consistently categorizes WMU as a top-100 national university as well as a Best Bang for the Buck school.

- **Money magazine** put WMU on its inaugural list of Best Colleges for Your Money in 2014.

- **The Princeton Review** has listed WMU for the past 12 straight years as one of the Best Midwestern Colleges.

- **Military Times** has selected WMU, the site of Michigan’s first Purple Heart University, as the only school in the state to warrant inclusion on all seven years of its annual Best for Vets list. WMU enrolls more than 700 military veterans, the greatest number of veterans enrolled at a public university in Michigan.

- **INSIGHT Into Diversity** has presented its Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award to WMU annually since 2013 in recognition of an “outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.”

- **U.S. Department of State** data shows that WMU was among the country’s 10 leading producers of American Fulbright Scholars in 2016-17.

Athletics

The WMU Broncos, members of the NCAA—Division I Mid-American Conference (MAC) and the National Collegiate Hockey Conference, are nationally competitive in fifteen varsity sports. Among many recent successes, Bronco student-athletes have excelled both on and off the field. For the first time in school history, WMU was named the winner of the 2016-17 Mid-American Conference Institutional Academic Achievement Award. WMU posted an overall athletic grade point average (GPA) of 3.253 for the 2016-17 academic year based on 398 students in 15 MAC sports. In that same year, the Bronco football team completed a perfect 12-0 regular season, earning a berth in the 2017 Cotton Bowl.
Kalamazoo and West Michigan
Even if you haven't been to Kalamazoo, you've probably heard a lot about it.

- It's the home of the Kalamazoo Promise that guarantees college tuition to graduates of the Kalamazoo Public Schools—the largest program of its kind anywhere.

- Well-known professional athletes, Greg Jennings of the Minnesota Vikings and Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees, are both graduates of Kalamazoo Central High School. Jennings is also a proud WMU graduate.

- In 2010, President Obama spoke in WMU's University Arena at the commencement ceremony for Kalamazoo Central after he selected the school from more than 1,000 entries as the winner in the first Race to the Top Commencement Challenge.

Kalamazoo is famous for a lot of things. It's a major international pharmaceutical and life sciences center; it's the original home of the Upjohn Co., Stryker Corp, Gibson Guitars, Checker Motors and Bell's Brewery, among many others; the Kalamazoo Gazette is the second oldest newspaper in Michigan; and a century ago, Kalamazoo was so famous for one crop, it was known throughout the country as the Celery City.

Abraham Lincoln spoke in the village of Kalamazoo in 1856, four years before he was elected president, his only public address in Michigan.

Kalamazoo is a center of higher education. In addition to WMU, it is home to Kalamazoo College and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. The three institutions collaborate on a variety of fronts and add significantly to the cultural and educational opportunities and economic development of the region.

With a population of more than 325,000, Kalamazoo is the sixth largest metropolitan area in Michigan and among the 150 largest in the country. It's large enough to support all the amenities and entertainment found in larger cities; and yet, you can be in the heart of farm country in 20 minutes, and Kalamazoo supports a thriving Farmers Market downtown May through November.

Kalamazoo is midway between Chicago and Detroit on I-94 and offers commercial transportation by train, bus and major airline at the Kalamazoo Battle Creek International Airport.

Day or weekend trips by train to Chicago, the nation's third largest city, are popular and even more convenient with the continuing development of high-speed rail connecting the two cities.
University Relations Division
Western Michigan University’s Office of University Relations is the internal and external voice of the university, telling its story on campus and in the community, and communicating a clear and consistent image of WMU as a respected research institution with a dynamic and diverse campus. University relations’ dedicated staff of fourteen writers, designers, marketing professionals, electronic communication specialists and support staff set the tone and look for the institution, manage the university’s brand, print and digital media, and establish university wide standards and guidelines for all communication. The office also is responsible for WMU's web presence and oversees all electronic communication.

The Position
Individuals seeking the position of VPMSC will find new president Dr. Edward Montgomery and a highly-engaged university community ready to lead WMU into its next phase of success in advancing a broad and ambitious mission in the community, state, nation and world.

The VPMSC is responsible for balancing central and decentralized communication authority, providing strategic guidance and cultivating collaborative relationships with the marketing and communication staff across the campus, colleges, as well as the Offices of Enrollment Management, Development and Alumni Relations, and Intercollegiate Athletics. She or he will be expected to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the key issues facing the university and its various units, and then shape appropriate strategies, structures, resource allocation, and staffing to ensure that those issues are effectively addressed and communicated. Given the decentralized nature of the institution, the VPMSC will need to function as a leader in a relationship-driven culture and have a tolerance for complexity and ambiguity.

The VPMSC will also need to keep the variety of constituents that make up Western Michigan’s community informed in a timely fashion of the various priorities and activities of the different parts of the university.
Opportunities and Challenges

The VPMSC will arrive at a transformational time at the university, with enormous excitement about the future of the university. The opportunities and challenges include:

Ensure that the university is broadcasting a consistent and compelling message and migrate towards an integrated marketing and communication platform.

- Create a formal integrated communication and marketing vision that will promote the university's public identity. Engage administrators, faculty, students and alumni in discussions about the vision, incorporating feedback and introducing processes for its consistent application across the university. Utilize quantitative market research and analysis to measure effectiveness and impact of the overall branding effort and specific communication.

- Create strategies for addressing the different needs and interests of WMU's diverse audiences, both internal (faculty, staff and students) and external, including alumni, potential donors, prospective students and their families, the public media, and various federal, state and local bodies. Develop additional vehicles to communicate with specific audiences when appropriate.

- Collaborate closely with campus partners, including but not limited to Enrollment Management, Development and Alumni Relations, Extended University Programs, and Intercollegiate Athletics, as well as all academic deans, their college leadership teams, and other units to ensure that all communication leverages the university's brand, look and feel.

- Provide a standard of excellence in all communication and marketing activities, auditing and assessing Western Michigan's internal and external communication and marketing vehicles. Identify best practices as well as inefficiencies and duplications.

- Establish an appropriate degree of consistency in both the messages conveyed and the means and methods employed to convey them. Monitor the impact of messages and relay the results so successful paths can be capitalized upon in subsequent outreach.
Provide partnership, counsel, and support to enhance collaboration with internal constituencies to better serve WMU's dedicated communities.

- Assist the undergraduate and graduate admissions offices and the academic colleges with their messaging needs. Partner on division and departmental recruitment and yield communication to support the achievement of their long-term strategic enrollment goals.

- Review and assess the digital and social media platforms, which have been and will continue to be critical to building national and global brand recognition and to continued enrollment success. Assist in and ensure the adaptation and execution of university's overall branding strategy to these media to further support Western Michigan's long-term and strategic enrollment needs.

- Leverage the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff to reinforce and enhance strategic messaging, particularly in the areas of student success, research accomplishments, and athletic successes.

- Exhibit poise and leadership during crisis situations and in associated communication by acting as the university's chief spokesperson. Serve as an integral and positive resource for the Western Michigan University community during challenging times.

- Enhance the mechanisms of support and counsel to the full range of university stakeholders, helping them to achieve their communication objectives while promoting the priorities and messages of the university as a whole.

- Increase the quality of communication among internal constituencies at Western Michigan. Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication, digital and social media, and recruitment publications approaches and adapt as necessary.
Increase the regional, national and international visibility of the university overall as well as its faculty, students, staff and alumni. Highlight a rich and diverse array of outstanding academic and student development programs and community initiatives. Ensure that the significant economic, intellectual and cultural roles that Western Michigan plays at the regional and national levels are well documented, represented and appreciated.

- Serve as senior counselor to the President, the President's Cabinet and other university leaders as they assess, monitor, manage and respond to issues that put the university in the public eye. Create an environment where opportunities for positive public relations are generated and aggressively pursued and where negative attention is adroitly handled.

- Assess and analyze all the ways WMU communicates with its constituencies, including, but not limited to: the website, publications, news releases, social media, admissions materials, campus and department-specific advertising including athletics, and events.

- Assist with WMU’s strategic communication response to major political issues at the federal, state and local levels. Where appropriate, draw upon the expertise and intellectual range of the university community to help inform political decision-making.

- In conjunction with university leadership, support a broad strategic approach for WMU’s interaction with, contributions to and partnership with the State of Michigan, and enhance public awareness of the university as a vital resource to the State and the communities that surround its campuses.

- Coordinate with all campus partners to ensure that the impact of WMU's actions and activities on local communities is carefully considered and factored into decision-making at all levels.
Lead the University Relations staff, promoting a culture of excellence, collaboration, and professional growth.

- Build a cohesive, professional team. Inspire and motivate staff through the free flow of information, placing staff members' work within the context of the brand marketing and communication strategy as well as within the university’s overall strategic goals.

- Lead by example; foster a working environment that rewards new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence, and encourages team-based efforts. Encourage and promote collaboration between the Office of University Relations staff and their counterparts throughout the university.

- Maintain a leadership style that is open and fluid, that empowers staff through active communication and delegation, and that ensures staff accountability for excellence through clearly defined and measurable goals.

- Establish goals in a collaborative manner to ensure that staff has a sense of responsibility and ownership for the successful outcomes of the university's communication and marketing efforts.

- Actively support, mentor, and train staff, providing frequent opportunities for professional development and growth.

- Actively advance WMU's demonstrated and determined commitment to diversity in all its forms on all campuses.

- Assess the existing organizational structures for marketing and communication, adjusting as necessary to fully leverage staff strengths and develop the optimal structure for achieving results and ensuring effective collaboration and coordination.
Minimum Qualifications:

- A record of significant experience envisioning, developing, and implementing a successful and comprehensive integrated marketing and communication program across a complex enterprise with multiple constituencies and a wide variety of audiences is required.

- A demonstrated ability to craft substantive and cohesive messages based on the institution's strategic goals, communicate them successfully to key audiences, and adapt and adjust as appropriate over time is required.

- Excellent oral and written communication skills are required.

- Superlative interpersonal skills with a demonstrated ability to work well with people at all levels of an organization, across a diverse range of education and social backgrounds, and to demonstrate an honest respect for each individual, is required.

- Bachelor's degree is required.

Preferred Qualifications:

This is an exciting opportunity for an innovative, experienced leader to join one of America's premier learner-centered public research universities and play a key role in its evolution and continued success. The ideal candidate will bring a distinguished record that commands the respect of the university community and encourages sustained collaboration and innovation. In addition, the individual must have significant leadership experience appropriate to the size and complexity of Western Michigan University. The next Vice President for Marketing and Strategic Communication will possess many of the following qualities and experiences:
• Significant experience in strategic marketing, communication planning, media relations and crisis management. Experience with federal, state, and local public policy issues.

• Substantial experience evaluating the strengths of existing marketing and communication programs and identifying opportunities for improvement. Ability to demonstrate effectiveness of programs and initiatives, using data-driven techniques and benchmarking.

• Ability to eloquently convey WMU’s vision and priorities to administration, faculty, staff, students and outside constituencies.

• Ability to support the President and other key university leaders and stakeholders in their personal presentations as appropriate, as well as to serve as an effective and compelling spokesperson for Western Michigan University when necessary.

• Expertise on the advantages and drawbacks of emerging digital media (websites, social media, etc.) in marketing and strategic communication for an institution, conveying information and content in ways that engage and excite constituents, including prospective students and their families, alumni, and the wider public.

• Skill working in a complex, decentralized environment serving many, and sometimes competing, internal clients and external constituents. Outstanding management and planning skills, including the ability to handle multiple projects simultaneously.

• Ability to craft and advocate data-driven positions, persuasively describing evidence and rationale with the president's cabinet and key academic leaders across the campus.

• Collaborative and collegial orientation, eager and able to engage a diverse client base, and able to build strong professional relationships. An approach that stresses customer service. A convener who synthesizes many ideas and produces work products that address a wide variety of goals and objectives.

• Record of creative and entrepreneurial management; the ability to build, lead, mentor, and motivate staff; and the ability to encourage change and growth in both people and programs. A strong commitment to personal and professional development, and the ability to build a strong, autonomous, and collaborative team.

• The intellectual depth, maturity and confidence to garner the trust of the President, Trustees, faculty, staff, alumni and other constituents. Strong personal integrity and work ethic, as well as a sense of humor and perspective.

• A keen eye for operational efficiency and optimal use of resources; the ability to plan, monitor, and manage a budget.

• Advanced degree preferred.
Salary
The salary is competitive and commensurate with qualifications and experience.

Applicant Review
Confidential applications and nominations will be accepted until the position is filled. For best consideration, applications and nominations should be provided by March 20, 2018.

How to Apply
Greenwood/ Asher & Associates, Inc. is assisting WMU in this confidential search. Initial screening of applications will begin immediately and will continue until an appointment is made. Individuals who wish to nominate a candidate should submit a letter of nomination including contact information for the nominee. Application materials should include a letter addressing how the candidate’s experiences match the position requirements, a curriculum vitae or resume and five references. Submission of materials as PDF attachments is strongly encouraged. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and application materials should be directed to:

Jan Greenwood, Betty Turner Asher, Partners
Crystal Cheatham, Executive Search Consultant
Greenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc.
42 Business Centre Drive, Suite 206
Miramar Beach, Florida 32550
Phone: 850-650-2277 / Fax: 850-650-2272
Email: jangreenwood@greenwoodsearch.com
Email: bettyasher@greenwoodsearch.com
Email: crystalcheatham@greenwoodsearch.com

For more information about WMU, please visit: http://wmich.edu/

WMU is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Minorities, women, veterans, individuals with disabilities and all other qualified individuals are encouraged to apply.