



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Leadership Profile

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Executive Summary

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) seeks an accomplished, innovative, and collaborative leader to serve as its next Chief Marketing and Communications Officer (CMCO). Reporting to President Brian Noland through the President's Chief of Staff and serving as a member of the President's Cabinet, the CMCO will lead the institution's marketing and communications enterprise, providing strategic vision and executive oversight for branding, media relations, digital strategy, reputation management, and related initiatives.

The CMCO will lead a highly respected Office of University Marketing and Communications and serve as a trusted advisor to University leadership on matters of institutional positioning, public perception, issues management, and stakeholder engagement.

This opportunity comes at an especially exciting moment in ETSU's history. Known as the "Flagship of Appalachia," ETSU is a public research university located in Johnson City, Tennessee, with a mission centered on improving the quality of life for the people of the region and beyond. Serving approximately 14,000 students, the University offers a comprehensive portfolio of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and is home to Tennessee's largest Academic Health Sciences Center, including the Quillen College of Medicine, College of Nursing, College of Health Sciences, College of Public Health, and the Gatton College of Pharmacy. This distinctive combination of academic, research, and clinical enterprises positions ETSU as a regional leader in education, healthcare, innovation, and public service.

ETSU is experiencing extraordinary institutional momentum. The University recently welcomed the largest first-year class in its history and has achieved record levels of student success, retention, graduation, research activity, and employee engagement. Research expenditures have increased dramatically over the past decade, and ETSU continues to advance its ambitious goals through the ETSU Board of Trustees-approved [Strategic Vision](#), [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#), and newly developed [Research Strategic Plan](#). University leaders consistently point to the institution's upward trajectory, strong financial position, growing reputation, and deep community support as evidence of a university on the rise.

The next CMCO will inherit a communications and marketing enterprise that has been transformed over the past five years into a modern, integrated operation that serves as a strategic partner across the University. Supported by a highly talented team and a culture grounded in collaboration, trust, innovation, and professional growth, the division is well-positioned for continued success. Building on this strong foundation, the new leader will help advance key initiatives already underway, including a comprehensive website redesign, implementation of a new research strategic plan, expanded community engagement efforts, and continued growth of integrated enrollment marketing strategies.

ETSU seeks a visionary and collaborative leader who combines strategic insight with operational excellence. The ideal candidate will be an accomplished marketing and communications executive who can strengthen the University's brand and reputation, foster meaningful partnerships across campus, and serve as a trusted advisor to the President and senior leadership team. Success in this role will require expertise in strategic communications, storytelling, digital engagement, crisis communications, and team leadership, along with a genuine commitment to ETSU's mission and the transformative impact of higher education.

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

Role of the Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

Guided by East Tennessee State University's mission and core values, the Chief Marketing and Communications Officer (CMCO) serves as the institution's senior communications strategist and brand leader. As a member of the University's leadership team, the CMCO advances ETSU's strategic priorities by developing and leading an integrated marketing, communications, and brand strategy that aligns with the University's vision, mission, and goals.

The CMCO is responsible for elevating the visibility and reputation of the University through compelling storytelling, strategic communications, and effective brand stewardship. In partnership with campus leadership, the CMCO supports efforts to attract and retain students, engage alumni and donors, recruit outstanding faculty and staff, and strengthen relationships with community, governmental, and policy leaders. The CMCO also provides leadership during opportunities and challenges affecting the institution's public profile, ensuring consistent and effective communication across audiences and channels.

The CMCO oversees the Office of University Marketing and Communications, leading a team of marketing and communications professionals responsible for advancing the University's goals through integrated communications, media relations, digital strategy, content development, and brand management. Beyond the central communications function, the CMCO provides strategic leadership and coordination for marketing and communications activities across the institution, fostering collaboration, consistency, and alignment among academic and administrative units.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the CMCO models and advances ETSU's core values, fostering a culture where people are treated with dignity and respect, relationships are grounded in trust and integrity, diverse perspectives are valued, excellence is achieved through collaboration and innovation, resources are stewarded responsibly, and a commitment to intellectual achievement remains central to the University's mission.

Job Duties

- Provides leadership and vision for the University's strategic and integrated marketing and communications functions.
- Leads a diverse team of graphic designers, project managers, marketing and editorial writers, media specialists, and videographers.
- Provides mentorship to staff, both in terms of departmental strategy and professional development.
- Facilitates coordination with marketing and communications professionals in all units across the University.
- Develops and executes a comprehensive, long-term, measurable, and research-based University-wide communications, marketing, and branding strategy in alignment with the institution's vision, mission, and goals.
- Creates a collegial and healthy work environment, motivating staff and cultivating productive, collaborative relationships with all constituent groups.
- Utilizes a research-based approach to identify key messages, audiences, and tactics.
- Provides strategic communications support to executive leadership through the preparation of speeches, remarks, memoranda, statements, and thought leadership content.
- Works consistently to tell the University's stories by weaving them together to create a consistent, unified message in support of the University's brand, goals, and values.

- Helps lead crisis and issues management planning and rapid response messaging to deal with critical events as they arise.
- Provides strategic counsel on reputation and issues management to senior leadership.
- Serves as the University's brand manager with the responsibility of positioning the University in the market, determining target audiences, and maintaining the desired reputation.
- Oversees the design and production of all marketing, public relations, and advertising products.
- Ensures effective and efficient operation of the Office of University Marketing and Communications by setting goals and objectives, designing effective workflow, management, and organizational structures and systems, and evaluating progress.
- Communicates the University's position and policies on a variety of issues to specific media and to various University constituencies, which includes serving as the University spokesperson with the media as appropriate.
- Ensures the fiscally responsible and sound operation of the Office of University Marketing and Communications.
- Develops policies and procedures related to marketing and communications activities across the University.
- Remains competent and current through self-directed professional reading, developing professional contacts with colleagues, attending professional development courses, and attending training and/or courses as required by the President.
- Contributes to the overall success of the University by performing all other duties as assigned.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The successful candidate will be an accomplished marketing and communications executive with a demonstrated ability to lead integrated marketing and communications functions within complex organizations. The next CMCO will have the opportunity to make significant contributions across several strategic areas and be expected to:

Sustain Momentum and Build Upon a Strong Foundation

The University seeks a leader who can preserve and strengthen the highly collaborative culture established within the Office of University Marketing and Communications while supporting the continued growth and development of an exceptionally talented team. It is of critical importance to maintain a people-first environment characterized by trust, empowerment, mentorship, responsiveness, and professional growth. The successful candidate will build on a strong foundation while positioning the division for continued success.

Lead the Next Era of Digital Transformation

Several significant initiatives are currently underway, including a comprehensive website redesign, implementation of Salesforce Marketing Cloud capabilities, enhanced digital personalization strategies, and broader modernization efforts across the institution. The CMCO will play a central role in guiding these initiatives and ensuring that ETSU continues to deliver engaging, accessible, and user-centered digital experiences for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community stakeholders.

Advance Integrated Marketing Strategies that Support Enrollment Growth

ETSU's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan establishes ambitious goals for growth and student success. The next CMCO will continue strengthening the integration among marketing, enrollment, communications, and student success functions to support recruitment, retention, and engagement efforts. Success will require a sophisticated understanding of modern marketing practices, audience segmentation, digital engagement, and data-informed decision-making.

Elevate the ETSU Brand and Institutional Reputation

ETSU possesses a compelling and authentic story rooted in educational opportunity, healthcare leadership, research growth, regional service, and community impact. The CMCO will further refine and elevate the University's brand position, ensuring that institutional accomplishments, distinctive strengths, and strategic priorities are communicated clearly and consistently across audiences. Particular emphasis will be placed on expanding awareness of its impact throughout the region and beyond.

Provide Strategic Leadership in Crisis Communications and Issues Management

As expectations for higher education continue to evolve, the CMCO will serve as a key advisor to the President and senior leadership team on crisis communications, reputation management, executive communications, and media relations. The successful candidate will demonstrate sound judgment, political awareness, and the ability to communicate effectively during complex and rapidly changing situations.

Support Emerging Institutional Priorities

The next CMCO will help communicate and advance several important University priorities, including implementation of ETSU's new research strategic plan, growing community engagement initiatives, future advancement and philanthropic efforts, and continued efforts to strengthen institutional visibility and impact. The CMCO will work closely with leaders across the University to ensure that strategic priorities are effectively communicated and supported through coordinated marketing and communications efforts.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The CMCO is supervised by the President through the President's Chief of Staff and oversees all team members within the Office of Marketing and Communications.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Demonstrated ability to develop and lead a strategic vision for the University's marketing and communications efforts.
- Experience developing and leading strategic, data-driven, comprehensive marketing and communications campaigns involving a wide range of stakeholders.
- Exceptional management and coordination experience resulting in unified marketing and communications efforts and collaboration across campus units.
- Exceptional research and analytical skills with experience in measuring the effectiveness of marketing and communications initiatives.
- Demonstrated success in applying a broad range of communication tools, including marketing, public relations, copywriting, design, social media, advertising, web and digital development, SEO, storytelling, creative development, and audio/video production.
- Exceptional interpersonal, organizational, and communication skills.
- Experience leading integrated marketing and communications strategies and trends.
- Understanding of higher education trends and audiences.
- Knowledge of brand development and standards, and of co-branding best practices.
- Knowledge of news reporting processes, ethical considerations, and best practices.
- Knowledge of the college enrollment process, including recruitment, admissions, financial aid, registration/enrollment, and student success.
- Demonstrated experience serving as the public spokesperson for a complex organization, representing institutional interests and communicating on sensitive and high-profile matters.
- Supervisory experience, including mentoring and providing professional development opportunities to staff.
- Knowledge of organizational planning, assessment, and budget oversight.
- Ability to function independently with minimum supervision.
- Knowledge of technology tools and systems, including Salesforce CRM, Adobe Creative Suite, Canva, Website Content Management systems, Project Management systems, data analysis and visualization software, and social media marketing and engagement platforms.

Required Qualifications

- Minimum 10 years of progressively responsible experience in marketing, communications, brand management, or a related field.

- Minimum 4 years of management experience with direct supervision of team members.
- Bachelor's degree or higher in marketing, communications, public relations, public administration, business administration, or related field.
- Experience developing and monitoring budgets.
- Experience advising on chief executive communications.
- Experience in crisis communications.

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.
- Experience working in a marketing, communications, or creative agency environment.
- Experience managing relationships with multiple clients with diverse needs and subject matters.
- Master's degree or higher in marketing, communications, public relations, public administration, business administration, or related field.





About East Tennessee State University

Overview

Bucs Go Beyond.

Nestled in the shadow of the Appalachian Mountains in Johnson City, Tennessee, East Tennessee State University (ETSU) is a thriving public research university and the flagship institution of the Appalachian Highlands. Since its founding in 1911, ETSU has remained steadfast in its mission to improve the quality of life for the people of the region and beyond through education, research, healthcare, and community engagement. Today, the University serves approximately 14,000 students through more than 160 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and is recognized for its commitment to student success, economic mobility, innovation, and public service.

ETSU combines the opportunities of a comprehensive research university with a deeply personal and community-centered culture. The institution is ranked among the nation's leaders for student outcomes and affordability, with a strong reputation for helping graduates achieve social and economic mobility while graduating with comparatively low levels of debt. As an institution grounded in the values of hard work, service, and opportunity, ETSU is a place where students from all backgrounds are empowered to succeed and compete with the best.

A defining strength of the University is its Academic Health Sciences Center, the largest public academic health sciences center in Tennessee. Through the Quillen College of Medicine, College of Nursing, College of Health Sciences, College of Public Health, the Gatton College of Pharmacy, as well as ETSU Health, the University prepares healthcare professionals, advances research, and expands access to care throughout the region. ETSU's integrated approach to education, research, and clinical service has established the institution as a national leader in rural health and community-focused healthcare.

ETSU is experiencing extraordinary momentum. The University recently welcomed the largest first-year class in its history and has achieved record levels of enrollment, student retention, graduation outcomes, research activity, and institutional engagement. Research expenditures have grown dramatically over the past decade, and the University has established ambitious strategic goals focused on enrollment growth, student success, research excellence, and regional impact. The ETSU Board of Trustees approved the University's Strategic Vision, a new Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, and a Research Strategic Plan, positioning ETSU for continued growth and distinction in the years ahead.

The University's story is inseparable from the region it serves. Located in the heart of the Appalachian Highlands, ETSU benefits from a vibrant arts and cultural environment, nationally recognized outdoor recreation opportunities, and strong partnerships across healthcare, education, industry, and community organizations. With more than 100,000 alumni worldwide and deep support throughout Northeast Tennessee and the surrounding region, ETSU serves as a catalyst for educational attainment, economic development, health outcomes, and quality of life.

Guided by its positioning statement, ETSU believes that ideas matter most when they are put into action. Students, faculty, and staff are energized by innovation, driven by purpose, and committed to making a tangible difference in the communities they serve. This ethos is reflected in a simple but powerful promise: Bucs work hard. Bucs give back. Bucs put people first. Bucs go beyond.

Leadership

Dr. Brian Noland

Dr. Brian Noland has served as President of East Tennessee State University since 2012 and is one of the most respected higher education leaders in the region. Under his leadership, ETSU has experienced a sustained period of growth and transformation marked by record enrollment achievements, unprecedented gains in student success, substantial growth in research activity, significant campus investments, and strengthened community partnerships. His administration has advanced the University's mission while elevating ETSU's reputation as a premier regional public university and the Flagship of Appalachia.



President Noland is widely recognized for fostering a culture grounded in collaboration, innovation, accountability, and student-centered decision-making. He has championed initiatives that expand educational access, improve graduation outcomes, strengthen ETSU's role as a driver of economic and community development, and advance the University's impact throughout the region and beyond. Under his leadership, ETSU has built strong momentum around enrollment growth, research excellence, healthcare innovation, and institutional engagement, creating a compelling foundation for the University's future.

The Chief Marketing and Communications Officer will join President Noland's leadership team at a pivotal and exciting moment in the University's history. As ETSU continues to build upon its momentum and tell its story to an increasingly broad audience, the CMCO will serve as a trusted strategic partner to the President, helping shape the University's brand, reputation, and public voice while advancing the institution's mission and strategic priorities.



Johnson City, TN

Set in an outdoor-lover's paradise, ETSU's main campus is located in beautiful and vibrant Johnson City, Tennessee. It is a short drive to numerous thriving mountain towns, including Bristol, Kingsport, and historic Jonesborough, as well as Asheville in bordering North Carolina.

And with gorgeous lakes, rivers, and hiking and biking trails nearby — including more than 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail — there is always something new to explore

[Explore Our Region](#)



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 East Tennessee State University in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by October 9.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Zach Smith, Ph.D. and Jenna Brumleve

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