

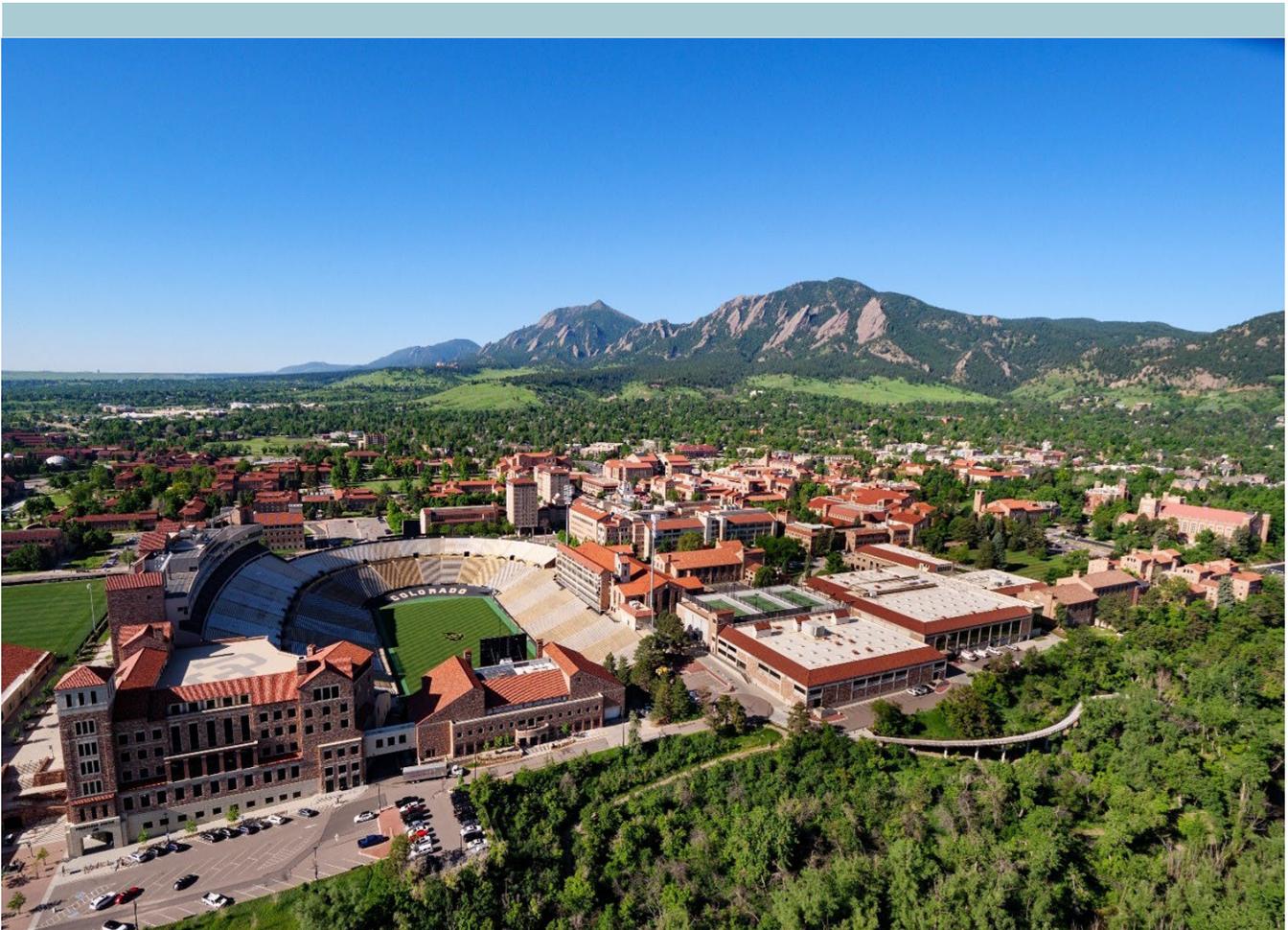


University of Colorado
Boulder

Vice Chancellor, Communications, Marketing and Social Media

Leadership Profile

March 2026



Executive Summary

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) seeks an inspiring future-focused communications leader – one who brings strategic vision, modern storytelling instincts and a collaborative leadership style – to serve as its next Vice Chancellor for Communications, Marketing and Social Media.

The University of Colorado Boulder is Colorado's leading public research university, transforming lives since 1876. As the state's flagship university and one of only 38 U.S. public research institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU), CU Boulder has proudly served Coloradans since the state's founding. Home to five Nobel Laureates since 1989 and the only university to send space instruments to every planet in the solar system, CU Boulder provides a strong return on investment by aligning efforts to achieve research and creative excellence, global sustainability impact and the success of all students, faculty and staff.

Serving as the Vice Chancellor for Communications, Marketing and Social Media (VC-CMSM) at CU Boulder presents an extraordinary opportunity for a visionary communications leader to shape the voice and reputation of a flagship institution at a transformational moment. As a top-ranked AAU and Big 12 university located in one of the most stunning, sustainability-focused communities in the country, CU Boulder sits at the nexus of academic excellence, environmental leadership and cultural vibrancy. The University's distinctive Boulder identity – curiosity-driven, daring, entrepreneurial – now intersects with an extraordinary constellation of emerging opportunities: Sundance's decision to establish its next home in Boulder, CU Boulder's 150th anniversary celebration, the University's selection as the host campus for the new Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability, and the expanding national platform and visibility provided by CU Boulder's athletics programs, among others. Coupled with bold ambitions from a new executive leadership team, rapidly expanding research impact and a deep commitment to student flourishing, the next Vice Chancellor will inherit a uniquely energizing foundation from which to elevate CU Boulder's story locally, nationally and globally.

Reporting to the Chancellor, the new VC-CMSM will serve as the strategic architect of a modern communications enterprise, bringing clarity, coherence and ambition to the University's voice while advancing the teaching and research missions of an AAU institution. At the highest level, this leader will define and implement a unified, holistic marketing and communications strategy that reflects CU Boulder's priorities, strengthens its reputation and brand stewardship and amplifies its most compelling stories. They will evolve the central communications organization into a forward-looking, integrated team equipped with the tools, structure and culture needed to deliver consistent, culturally competent, audience-centered communications. This includes elevating digital impact and social capabilities, elevating internal communication as a strategic function and fostering collaborative alignment with partners across campus to ensure CU Boulder speaks with a coordinated, inclusive, inspiring and bold voice.

To succeed, the next VC-CMSM will bring both the professional acumen and personal leadership qualities needed to operate in a decentralized, high-visibility, rapidly changing environment. Professionally, they will be an accomplished, integrated communications leader with significant experience- in complex organizations – preferably within a research-intensive university; expertise in brand, digital and social strategy; proven success advising senior executives; and strong skills in organizational development, coaching and team transformation. They must be technologically fluent, data-informed, and -forward-looking, and able to modernize tools and systems while championing accessible, inclusive, culturally competent communications. Personally, the ideal leader will be a strategic integrator, a builder and coach, a calm and steady change navigator and a trust-first partner who engages authentically with campus stakeholders. Above all, they will be modern storytellers, capable of capturing CU Boulder's distinctive spirit, elevating its achievements and uniting the campus around a compelling, future-looking narrative.

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

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Vice Chancellor will step into a moment of exceptional momentum and possibility, with the charge to shape a modern, integrated strategy that elevates CU Boulder's distinctive strengths, fosters alignment across campus and equips the institution to communicate with greater purpose, unity and impact.

The next Vice Chancellor will be responsible for advancing the following priorities, among others:

Build and drive a clear, comprehensive audience-centric communications and marketing strategy aligned with CU Boulder's mission and goals

- Translate the Chancellor's vision and campus priorities into a cohesive, enterprise-wide communications strategy that connects academic excellence, research strengths, student success, community engagement and CU Boulder's distinctive culture.
- Drive a proactive, brand-forward reputation strategy – one that not only elevates undertold stories, including research breakthroughs, sustainability leadership, strategic partnerships and faculty excellence, but also reinforces CU Boulder's core brand positioning, strengthens market differentiation and advances the University's long-term brand equity among priority audiences.
- Drive a proactive reputation-enhancing model – one that elevates under-told stories, including research breakthroughs, sustainability leadership, strategic partnerships, faculty excellence, among others – to key audiences.
- Embed cultural competency, inclusive messaging, and nuanced framing in all communications and marketing.
- Establish clarity on goals, audiences and desired outcomes to guide decision making, resourcing and the prioritization of high-impact initiatives across the institution.
- Ensure the communications strategy is co-created with academic, operational and unit leaders so communications support the leadership voice on major initiatives.
- Work in close partnership with the Chancellor and senior leadership to anticipate, navigate, and respond to institutional challenges and crises, providing trusted strategic counsel, translating leadership direction into clear and credible communications, and executing coordinated response strategies that protect the University's reputation, sustain public trust, and uphold its mission and values.

Align the central communications organization to achieve the institutional communications strategy

- Design and structure the central communications team around the University's mission and strategic priorities, clarifying roles, decision rights, workflows and the boundary between leadership responsibilities and communications execution.
- Strengthen the central team's ability to drive alignment by providing clear guidance, shared tools and consistent governance that make it easier for units to connect with and follow a unified institutional strategy.
- Establish expectations for accountability, responsiveness and a strong service orientation within the central team so it can effectively support leadership and model best-in-class communications practices for the broader campus ecosystem.
- Assess and elevate central team capabilities – coaching, upskilling and evolving the organization into a modern, integrated marketing and communications team with strengths in storytelling, digital and social

engagement, brand, CRM, issues management, executive communications and advanced intelligence capabilities (including analytics, social intelligence and cultural intelligence).

Lead a strategic brand platform and university-wide storytelling engine

- Evaluate and evolve CU Boulder's enterprise brand framework, assessing current positioning, value proposition, brand pillars and audience insights, and refine it into a clear, modern and differentiating foundation that guides all communications, marketing and storytelling efforts across the University and on a national and global scale.
- Craft an authentic, resonant brand narrative that brings the brand framework to life and unifies CU Boulder's distinctions - research strengths, CU Boulder's culture of creativity and openness identity, sustainability leadership and student-centered mission, among others – and ensure it is embraced internally as well as externally.
- Empower units with shared messaging frameworks, brand tools and story packages so that every communicator on campus can contribute to a consistent storytelling system.
- Shift the culture toward telling bold, differentiated stories that reinforce CU Boulder's market positioning across disciplines – from quantum and aerospace to dance, climate, entrepreneurship and health and well-being – while ensuring that communications meaningfully resonate with niche audiences, so audiences clearly understand how CU Boulder's work connects to and benefits their lives.
- Develop mechanisms and processes for identifying, prioritizing and distributing high-value stories, grounded in the brand framework, across paid, earned, owned and social channels, making storytelling a repeatable, campuswide engine.
- Define and track key brand health metrics to measure how effectively the brand framework and narrative strengthen CU Boulder's reputation and competitive position.

Modernize CU Boulder's digital, social, and marketing technology and scale usage

- Lead a digital transformation that modernizes management platforms (web, CRM, marketing cloud, DAM, social media ecosystem) to enable targeted communications, personalization and modern engagement.
- Continue to build a sophisticated, integrated marketing technology stack that supports the full lifecycle – from prospective students to alumni – and reduces manual, fragmented processes.
- Elevate the social media strategy by anticipating new trends and emerging platforms with clearer audience segmentation, richer video and multimedia content, and a modern presence on channels where students and external audiences truly are.
- Strengthen digital accessibility practices and ensure content is optimized for accessibility, search and AI-driven discovery.

Make internal communications a strategic muscle that builds trust and belonging

- Create a coherent internal communications strategy that helps faculty, staff and students navigate change, understand priorities and feel connected to the community.
- Strengthen listening, transparency, and consistency to build trust, ensuring messages are coordinated, timely, and reflective of campus' culture, values and priorities.
- Tailor communications to different internal audiences (students, faculty, staff) using modalities that fit their habits and evolving expectations (e.g., more social/multimedia for students and dynamic personalized portal experiences).

Further strengthen partnerships with cross-campus and system-wide communications teams

- Build upon a deeply collaborative ecosystem among the 300+ communicators across campus, reinforcing shared goals, shared tools and shared messaging frameworks so each unit can contribute to a unified institutional voice.
- Deepen coordination with the CU System Office by establishing clear communication channels, aligning campus and system-level priorities and ensuring messaging, tools and initiatives are synchronized across the broader CU ecosystem.
- Strengthen existing structures (e.g., Executive Leadership Communications Board, annual communications conference, shared toolkits) and evolve them into true co-governance bodies that shape content strategy, channel standards and campus-wide storytelling priorities.
- Enhance alignment between central and embedded communicators by providing clear guidance, transparent decision making and consistent two-way communication, ensuring units feel supported rather than directed.
- Further strengthen partnerships by advancing CU Boulder's global initiatives and international outreach while deepening local and regional engagement, including collaborations with community partners and civic leaders, fostering meaningful connections with stakeholders and audiences at all levels.
- Foster a culture of trust, accountability and mutual respect where communicators at all levels feel heard, equipped and empowered to carry the University's narrative forward while honoring unit-level needs, audiences and expertise.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Reporting to the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, Communications, Marketing and Social Media serves as CU Boulder's chief strategist and steward for brand, reputation and enterprise communications. Operating in a dynamic moment of institutional change, with a new executive leadership team, evolving organizational design and a decentralized network of communicators, the VC-CMSM will set a compelling vision, assess and build team capabilities, modernize tools and processes, and partner across campus to deliver culturally competent, high-impact storytelling and results. Technology and social media will be core pillars of this transformation – professionalized, resourced, and measured as a primary driver of real-time reputation, reach and community connection.

As a senior member of the University's leadership team, the Vice Chancellor will serve as a trusted colleague and key contributor to the Chancellor's Executive Committee and Cabinet, helping to shape institutional priorities and promote a cohesive, mission-aligned vision for CU Boulder. The successful candidate will demonstrate a deep commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion across their division and the broader campus community and employ a shared equity leadership approach that embeds responsibility and accountability at all levels. This leader will be expected to model inclusive decision-making, foster collaborative and respectful partnerships, and contribute meaningfully to creating environments where every member of the community feels valued, supported and able to thrive.

Required Qualifications

- A graduate degree required, or an equivalent combination of advanced education and senior-level experience.
- Eight (8) years of progressively responsible leadership in communications, marketing, brand, or public affairs within a large, complex organization (higher education, public sector, nonprofit and/or private industry).
- Demonstrated success leading integrated communications and marketing across multiple channels, including social media.
- Proven experience translating institutional goals into strategies, plans and measurable outcomes.
- Experience in budget management, fiscal planning and people leadership (organizational development, hiring, coaching, performance management, and team culture).
- Proven ability to build strong relationships with senior leaders and teams at all levels, and to lead through influence in distributed environments.
- Track record advising executives through sensitive, high-visibility, or crisis situations.
- Experience building culturally competent communications and collaborating effectively with diverse internal and external stakeholders.
- Experience in crisis communications.
- Demonstrated success in media relations and issues management.
- Exceptional critical thinking, writing, speaking, interpersonal and intercultural communication skills.

Preferred Qualifications

- Deep experience and familiarity with higher education context and norms; ability to adapt change-management approaches to an academic environment.
- Proven ability to evaluate organizational structures and align people, processes and resources to strengthen strategic execution and support institutional priorities.
- Success operating in decentralized and shared-governance environments; adept at influencing without direct authority.
- Demonstrated results from multi-channel, integrated campaigns that build national reputation, support enrollment or drive stakeholder engagement.
- Leadership of brand strategy, creative development, digital and social media and audience research/insights.
- Technologically fluent and innovative, with experience modernizing the stack (listening, analytics, CMS, CRM, marketing automation) and embracing emerging technologies and tools.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills; proven use of data to drive decisions and demonstrate impact.

Personal Qualities

- Culture champion: Models empathy, respect and inclusivity, creating environments where people feel valued, supported and able to do their best work.
- Strategic integrator: Operates with a systems mindset, connecting people, ideas and functions to create coherence and align priorities.
- Emotional intelligence: High self-awareness, strong listening skills and the ability to connect authentically across leadership and campus communities.
- Builder and coach: Assesses talent and organizational design; develops people; sets clear expectations; raises the bar with empathy.
- Calculated risk taker: Weighs uncertainty with discipline and acts decisively when the path forward carries both risk and opportunity. Learns quickly from obstacles and setbacks, adapts with agility and continues moving forward with clarity and purpose.
- Change-ready and steady: Leads through and navigates ambiguity and sustained change with judgment, transparency and calm.
- Trust-first partner: Builds and sustains strong relationships; listens deeply, communicates with transparency and follows through reliably.
- Modern storyteller: Leads with a narrative mindset, making complex ideas accessible, surfacing what is most compelling and human, and ensuring stories are told with authenticity, cultural awareness and emotional intelligence.
- Data-driven operator: Establishes goals, dashboards and learning cycles that guide resource allocation and demonstrate impact.

About the University of Colorado Boulder

Overview

The University of Colorado Boulder, founded in 1876, is Colorado's leading public research university and the flagship institution of both the state and the University of Colorado System. Serving more than 38,000 undergraduate and graduate students and supported by over 8,000 faculty and staff, CU Boulder is one of only 38 U.S. public research universities in the Association of American Universities (AAU).

Home to five Nobel Laureates since 1989 and recognized as the only university to send space instruments to every planet in the solar system, CU Boulder delivers a strong return on investment through research and creative excellence, global sustainability impact, and a deep commitment to the belonging, well-being, and success of its students and community. With eight colleges and schools offering more than 90-degree programs and 4,000 courses, the University's world-class faculty provides high-impact learning opportunities while advancing innovative research and creative work.

Mission and Vision

Our mission is to serve as the [state of Colorado's comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards](#), offering a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs.

Vision

Our vision is to be [a leader in identifying and addressing the humanitarian, social, and technological challenges of the 21st century](#).

Strategic Priorities

As one of America's leading public research universities, CU Boulder is focused on creating a student-centered campus culture that enables the belonging and success of everyone in our community. In addition, CU Boulder is pursuing these specific strategic objectives:

- **Research and Creativity:** Research and creativity changes the world for the better – addressing problems and finding innovative solutions. CU Boulder faculty and students are leading research in many fields, including aerospace and space sciences, biosciences and health, social science, arts and/or humanities, climate, energy and sustainability.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** The CU Boulder campus community must continue the necessary, hard and ongoing work of ensuring the University is a diverse, inclusive and welcoming place for all who live, work and study here. The University is committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community through Shared Equity Leadership. CU Boulder understands it has hard work to do to make the progress that must be achieved.
- **Student-Centered Campus Community:** CU Boulder's core public mission is centered on the belonging, well-being and success of undergraduate and graduate students.
- **Health and Wellness:** CU Boulder is committed to supporting the health and wellness of its community members. The University encourages the campus community to explore the resources available to support them—including opportunities like the University's Health & Wellness Summit—as part of the university's ongoing commitment to a culture of health, care and well-being across campus.

- **Campus Success:** CU Boulder is planning for the future to ensure that our campus' physical plant continues to sustain world-renowned research, a diverse, equitable and inclusive community, and the well-being and success of its students.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado's flagship university, honors and recognizes the many contributions of Indigenous peoples in our state. CU Boulder acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute and many other Native American nations. Their forced removal from these territories has caused devastating and lasting impacts. While the University of Colorado Boulder can never undo or rectify the devastation wrought on Indigenous peoples, we commit to improving and enhancing engagement with Indigenous peoples and issues locally and globally.

We will do this by:

- Recognizing and amplifying the voices of Indigenous CU Boulder students, staff and faculty, and their work.
- Educating, conducting research, supporting student success and integrating Indigenous knowledge.
- Consulting, engaging, and working collaboratively with tribal nations to enhance our ability to provide access and culturally sensitive support and to recruit, retain and graduate Native American students in a climate that is inclusive and respectful.

Creating Supportive Environments

Creating and supporting campus environments where everyone matters and all can thrive is not the responsibility of a single campus unit, but of the entire campus community. Our collaborative work must form a solid foundation for all we do: teaching, research, development, leadership, mentorship, supervision, innovation and service. Building on shared equity leadership, academic and administrative units are creating action plans to support student, faculty and staff success.



About Communications at CU Boulder

For information about CU Boulder's current communications enterprise, please visit:

- [Home | Strategic Relations and Communications](#)
- [What We Do](#)
- [Our Communications Partners](#)

Leadership

Justin Schwartz, Chancellor



As the 12th chancellor of the University of Colorado Boulder, Justin Schwartz is committed to transforming lives through the mission of Colorado's public flagship university.

Schwartz joined the campus on July 1, 2024, from The Pennsylvania State University, where he served as executive vice president and provost from 2022-2024.

He previously served as Harold and Inge Marcus Dean of Penn State's College of Engineering from

2017 to 2022 and has spent his career as a researcher, educator, entrepreneur, and academic leader in large state universities.

Schwartz holds a bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a doctorate in nuclear engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He is a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and ASM International. Schwartz holds seven patents.

A highly visible, transparent, and engaged leader, Schwartz is focused on advancing campus research and leadership in sustainability, supporting innovation and interdisciplinary education, and ensuring that all students, faculty, staff, and alumni survive and thrive as valued members of an equitable and just CU Boulder community.



Boulder, Colorado

Located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, about 25 miles northwest of Denver, Boulder is the 12th-largest city in Colorado, with a population of approximately 105,000. Residents enjoy more than 300 days of sunshine a year and an impressive variety of recreation, shopping, dining, cultural and entertainment choices.

At the foot of the mountains, outdoor activities abound, including hiking in the landmark Flatirons with more than 60 parks and 155 miles of hiking trails open to the public. Boulder is also a biking mecca: there are four bikes for every one person, 300 miles of dedicated bikeways, mountain biking trails, a 29-acre free bike park, cycling clubs and more.

Downtown Boulder offers shops, restaurants and street performers on the Pearl Street Mall, as well as the Boulder County Farmers Market in the warm summer months. A strong arts community, with galleries, museums, musical performances and more, provides entertainment rich in culture.

From the Rocky Mountains to an engaging downtown, Boulder is ranked as the number one college town by Universities.com and offers something for everyone.

For more details about Boulder, visit: www.bouldercoloradousa.com.

Procedure for Candidacy

Applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited.

Applications should include, as two separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. Please submit applications through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal [here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at www.wittkieffer.com. For full consideration, all materials should be received by Thursday, April 16, 2026.

Please direct inquiries and nominations to the WittKieffer consultants assisting the University of Colorado Boulder with this recruitment:

Suzanne Teer, Ashlee Musser, and Jenna Brumleve

CUBoulderVCComms@wittkieffer.com

CU Boulder will offer an annual salary range of \$314,900-377,900 for this role, plus a recruitment incentive and a moving allowance (if applicable).

Commitment to Job Application Fairness: Applicants are not required to provide age or age-related information and may redact information related to age, date of birth, or dates of attendance at or graduation from an educational institution from any submissions during the initial application process.

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to building a culturally diverse community of faculty, staff and students dedicated to contributing to an inclusive campus environment. We are an Equal Opportunity employer, including veterans and individuals with disabilities.

