



## Director of Communications

Hackley School  
Tarrytown, NY

### Executive Summary

Hackley School, a private coeducational K-12 day school, seeks an innovative and resourceful Director of Communications to envision, co-develop and implement a comprehensive set of integrated communications strategies. These strategies, designed to advance the priorities of the School, will convey a clearly defined sense of Hackley's values, shared achievements, aspirations and identity as a place of learning based on authenticity, generosity, and character.

Strategic and proactive, the new Director of Communications will collaborate with Hackley's highly engaged community to craft narratives that amplify Hackley's distinctive mission and deliver stories that are authentic, compelling, and designed to inspire connection across all communications platforms (print, web and social media, media relations, community outreach and events).

Hackley School was founded in 1889 through the generosity of local Mrs. Frances Hackley, who, in partnership with leading Unitarians of the era, sought to create a non-sectarian school that embraced Unitarian values of intellectual questioning and inclusiveness, welcoming students of diverse religious, economic, ethnic, and national origin. Hackley has evolved since its founding into a coeducational K-12 day school with five-day Upper School boarding. Those who walk through the entrance of Hackley's main building are greeted by the engraving, "Enter Here to Be and Find a Friend;" this core value permeates Hackley's beautiful 285-acre campus, known as the "Hilltop." Located just 30 minutes north of New York City, the campus features a new Center for Health & Wellness, numerous playing fields, and the Hackley Forest complete with outdoor classrooms and wetlands facility. Today, Hackley teaches 840 students across three divisions (Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools), boasting an average class size of 16 and a 7:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

Hackley offers an exceptional, well-rounded experience - reimagining a liberal arts education with a broadened curriculum of competencies and experiences to meet the needs of tomorrow's learners and citizens. The School cultivates a strong and distinct culture emphasizing relationships, diversity of perspectives, accomplishment defined by serving a greater public purpose and enduring academic skills. Students, parents, alumni, faculty and the administration form deep relationships in an inclusive community in which they respectfully challenge and support one another to grow in new ways for meaningful connection. This deep sense of belonging empowers students and alumni to transcend beyond individual achievement and exemplifies another of Hackley's core values – *to go forth and spread beauty and light* – rising to complex challenges and anticipating the needs of a constantly changing modern era as citizens of the world. Over forty percent of Hackley's faculty reside on campus, enabling them to participate in the life of the campus beyond the classroom and the opportunity to provide formative guidance and celebrate in the success of students that is rare for a day school. The Director will capitalize on all of these unique Hackley assets to make the cases for enrollment and continued philanthropic support.

Hackley draws families from a broad range of geographies from Westchester to New York City and New Jersey to Connecticut. Hackley has a magnetic pull that fosters inter-connectedness, intellectual curiosity and shared accomplishment. The Director will imagine new ways of bringing Hackley's immersive experiences to life beyond its physical campus as well as how Hackley's values remain in practice by its citizens past and present.

In recent years, but especially with COVID-19 and distance learning, virtual and online engagement has become a key piece of campus life and stakeholder communication. Videos of life at Hackley, showcases of student achievements, and streaming of athletic events have received acclaim from the school community, especially parents. The Director will be responsible for developing content, maintaining both responsive and strategic messaging, collecting feedback, and providing updates across all these channels to ensure timely and interesting engagement, as well as continual improvement.

Head of School Michael C. Wirtz, now in his fourth year at Hackley, is bringing a thoughtful arc of evolution and appreciative inquiry to Hackley, uplifting proficiencies in the liberal arts curriculum while advancing its offerings in STEM (Science, Technology and Math), as well as affirming commitments to equity and inclusion and the social/emotional well-being of students. Hackley features a MakerSpace that encourages students to learn what happens when they experiment in a hands-on, social environment to create something meaningful that had not existed before. The School's new Center for Health and Wellness is a community-building platform. An exciting new strategic plan led by a steering committee of diverse stakeholders and launched in 2018, [\*Redefining Excellence\*](#), charts a vision for the next era of Hackley School that promotes learning opportunities for students beyond the boundaries of disciplines, classroom, and campus, and positions Hackley as an educational leader and incubator that: pushes the boundaries of existing programs; promotes lifelong professional learning within Hackley's faculty and the next generation of independent school educators; and champions a culture of wellness – both at the student and institutional levels – as cornerstones of a healthy learning environment and school community.

### **The Director of Communications**

Reporting to the Director of Advancement and working closely with the Head of School, advancement and enrollment staff, academic leadership, parents, and alumni, the Director will develop and implement a school-wide comprehensive communications and outreach plan, drawing from a recent School-wide branding exercise. They will manage a small staff of 1.5 FTEs responsible for content development, web and social media communications, and multimedia production, working to align community expectations with a unified Hackley brand.

The Director will work with constituent groups to provide clarity of institutional messaging through a range of strategic communications opportunities, including signature School publications, online engagement tools such as video and Hackley Online (the school's intranet), and direct communications from academic leadership and the Head of School.

Under the leadership of Director of Advancement Teresa S. Weber, the advancement office has sought to be more strategic in its approach, migrating from intense efforts that are highly responsive to immediate need, to institutionally aligned activities with more formalized organizational goal setting and integrated work across advancement departments. The Director will be key to this efforts, which will contribute to: a comprehensive communications plan and roadmap for the improved flow of information; a more holistic and unified partnership with enrollment management around admissions and retention that maximizes resources and communicates a well-defined value proposition capturing the attention of prospective students and parents in ways that are distinctive and fresh; a more dynamic approach to parent, donor, and alumni engagement that supports the attainment of fundraising and engagement goals in measurable ways; a vibrant yet balanced approach to content development that aligns institutional-level messaging with organic story-telling and supports the sharing of a diverse array of accomplishments/learnings that should be uplifted for and by faculty, coaches, staff, students, parent volunteers and alumni.

They will think expansively about their own responsibilities, serving as a true citizen of each department and unit as well as the broader Hackley community. It will be critical that the Director demonstrate a high EQ and a

willingness to approach interpersonal relationships judiciously and with empathy – bringing a spirit of building genuine trust and caring in the attainment of mutually beneficial goals.

The primary responsibilities of the next Director will include:

### **Role & Responsibilities**

**Develop, implement and measure an integrated communications plan that conveys a clear understanding of Hackley’s distinctive identity and supports institutional priorities.**

Particular emphasis will be placed on fostering connection across and among internal and external stakeholders, with the aim of strengthening student and parent recruitment and retention, and supporting resource development in the attainment of fundraising, parent volunteer engagement, and alumni engagement goals.

Provide a framework and guidance for a core set of messages that may be tailored for specific constituent audiences across all communications platforms - print, web and social media, media relations, community outreach and events.

**Provide leadership and focus for communications efforts and ensure consistency of messaging with the overall communications plan.**

Streamline Hackley’s broad array of communications activities and resources into efforts that have more clearly defined outcomes and measurable goals. This includes an audit and assessment of the effectiveness of Hackley’s communications efforts and tools with appropriate budget adjustments/investments.

Establish goals in a collaborative manner to ensure internal and external partners (Head of School, Advancement, Enrollment, Academic Leadership, Athletics, and Performing Arts) have a sense of responsibility and ownership for successful outcomes of Hackley’s communications efforts.

**Champion an approach to communications in which all forms of messaging are aligned and ladder up to tell the unique story of Hackley.**

Work closely with faculty and administrative leadership to recognize internal and external communications opportunities and solutions and define and execute appropriate strategies to support them.

Write and edit content for various communications initiatives and manage supporting teams engaged in related work. Think creatively about storytelling and content delivery.

Provide expert communications counsel to the Head of School and senior academic and administrative leaders, supporting them in their roles as spokespeople for their areas of expertise and supporting them in identifying and uplifting communications solutions. This will include community outreach/engagement, crisis communications, and media relations.

Build and cultivate relationships with internal partners and external consultants to facilitate effective communications efforts.

Identify challenges and emerging issues faced by Hackley that impact the faculty, student life, and parent/donor/alumni engagement.

**Provide leadership for a small but high capacity communications team. Set goals and expectations of communications projects, manage workflow, and ensure successful outcomes of the Schools communications efforts.**

Explore opportunities for modifying Hackley's existing communications organizational structure and budget in order to ensure coordination, productivity, and responsiveness, to enhance communication, and to promote staff collaboration while being mindful of the pressures and limitations of working in a small department. This will also require setting appropriate deadline expectations both inside the Office of Communications and throughout the Hackley community.

Develop metrics to measure the performance of existing communications efforts and the return on investment of new communications approaches.

Spearhead the development and maintenance of systems and tools for project management, workflow and documentation of assigned operations; oversee the preparation of reports and correspondence for senior leadership and the Board as required.

### **Success Profile**

- Communicates both Hackley's commitment to its enduring traditions and its exciting vision for the future – tailoring those messages as necessary to reach different audiences.
- Fosters a culture of curiosity and continual improvement in the Office of Communications, identifying opportunities and developing tools where appropriate to track projects and enhance efficiency.
- Success and experience with developing and executing strategic communications programs that serve many different stakeholder groups.
- Maintains currency with best practices, innovative developments, and trends in the communications field, including emerging technologies and news across the independent school sector.
- Capitalizes on opportunities to continue developing as a professional.
- Engages fully in the life of the school.
- Builds and maintains a professional rapport with a broad audience – students, faculty, alumni, donors, parents and all other staff.

## Qualifications

In addition to the abilities to achieve the above core responsibilities, ideal candidates will possess the following qualifications and attributes:

- A minimum of seven years of progressive experience in communications and marketing, preferably in an academic setting.
- BA/BS degree required; a Master's degree is preferred.
- Strong leadership experience with a track record of meeting or exceeding goals.
- Success in developing and deploying a comprehensive communications plan that serves both higher-level strategic priorities and multiple constituencies.
- Exceptional ability to analyze and synthesize information for multiple constituencies.
- Deep curiosity around continual improvement and a commitment to helping others improve also.
- Obviously excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Demonstrated self-initiative and the motivation to achieve challenging goals.
- Commitment to working collaboratively within an advancement department and across the Hackley School community.
- An ability to travel and work some nights/weekends as required.
- A healthy sense of humor and good balance of confidence and humility.

## How To Apply

Hackley School has retained Talent Citizen to assist in this recruitment. President Tracy Welsh and Senior Associate Connor Daley are leading this search.

Please submit your resume and a cover letter outlining your interest, the reasons why you are best suited for the position and would be a great addition to the Hackley community, and where you learned of the position. Nominations and application materials should be sent directly to: [HS-DOC@talentcitizen.com](mailto:HS-DOC@talentcitizen.com)