



Position Specification

Cranbrook Educational Community
Chief Communications Officer

Our Client

Cranbrook Educational Community

[Cranbrook Educational Community](#) (CEC) is a globally respected leader in education, science, and art with a storied history dating back to 1904. Their community of inquiry and learning includes the Academy of Art, Cranbrook Art Museum, the Center for Collections and Research, the Institute of Science, Cranbrook Schools, and Cranbrook House and Gardens. Cranbrook's spectacular and historic 320-acre campus is graced by architecturally-significant buildings, outdoor sculptures, and stunning natural and tended landscapes. Each year, more than 300,000 visitors and learners of all ages and interests engage in their outstanding educational programs and experiences. The Cranbrook community develops individuals who live with purpose and integrity, create with passion, explore with curiosity, and strive for excellence. Cranbrook is committed to championing inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) in all things. They emphasize excellence, innovation, collaboration, stewardship and service. These values contribute to the bravery and creativity that push forward their goal of continually building an environment that respects and cultivates everyone's gifts.

About CEC

Academy of Art

Cranbrook Academy of Art is the nation's top-ranked school devoted exclusively to graduate education in art, architecture, craft, and design. Each year, more than 100 self-motivated students come together to form an artistic community in which each individual develops with the mentorship of renowned Artists-in-Residence.

Cranbrook's simple but radical educational approach, is truly singular in the world of graduate art schools, and was created more than 85 years ago, and its programs have consistently produced some of the world's leading artists, architects, and designers.

Cranbrook Art Museum

Cranbrook Art Museum presents and collects the art, architecture, craft, and design of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries with a special focus on the achievements of artists from Cranbrook Academy of Art and Detroit.

The Museum connects today's diverse and adventuresome artists and audiences with important developments in the arts. The Museum centers artists and artworks to drive conversations that inspire us as individuals, cultures, and communities. The Museum does this work at the heart of a landmark campus of exceptional design that serves as a destination for visitors from down the street and around the world.

Center for Collections and Research

The Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research reveals the Cranbrook story and offers intellectual and experiential engagement with its legacy. By sustaining and interpreting the community's unparalleled landscape, architecture, collections, and archives, the Center provides memorable educational experiences and meaningful research opportunities for regional, national, and international audiences.

The Institute for Science

Cranbrook Institute of Science is a natural history and science museum that fosters in its audiences a passion for understanding the world around them and a lifelong love of learning. Through its broadly based educational programs, including the Freshwater Forum environmental science programs, its permanent and changing exhibits and its collections and research, the Institute develops a scientifically literate public able to thrive with today's knowledge-based society. Moreover, Cranbrook Institute of Science generates the enthusiasm for learning about the natural world that will produce the scientists of tomorrow. The Institute also plays an important role in supplying science education to Southeast Michigan, including neighboring public school districts in Flint and Pontiac.

Cranbrook Schools

One of the largest independent schools in the country, Cranbrook Schools welcomes 1,650 students grades preK-12. The comprehensive elementary and secondary programs cultivate wonder, and through the uniquely appointed campus and academic partnerships across that campus, create unparalleled opportunity for intellectual, creative and athletic excellence, personal well-being and social responsibility. Cranbrook Schools are a community that practices respect, interdependence, and scholarship. Inclusion, diversity, equity, and access are elemental to Cranbrook's international identity.

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The student experience at Cranbrook Schools does more than prepare students for college in a wholly unique and authentic way. It prepares young learners to take their place after college as thinking adults in this highly-connected, global world.

Thanks to the international reputation, as well as the vibrant upper school boarding program, students come from states across the country and nations around the world to live and learn at Cranbrook Schools. This international student body ultimately exposes students of every age to a wide range of ideas and viewpoints. It helps them become more worldly before they meet the world on their own, and it allows them to form lifelong friendships with their teachers and with remarkable peers from every walk of life and every point on the globe.

Cranbrook House and Gardens

Cranbrook House was designed by Detroit architect Albert Kahn in 1908 for the founders of Cranbrook, George Gough Booth and Ellen Scripps Booth, and served as their family home for 40 years. The estate is now the centerpiece of the Cranbrook Educational Community campus, a National Historic Landmark. Stroll through the Sunken Garden, discover The Mountain and more tree-covered trails, and take a moment to unwind by the Japanese Garden. Enjoy all 40 acres of Cranbrook Gardens - featuring extensive plantings, fountains, statuary, lakes and streams - as they evolve from spring through fall.

Detroit and Southeastern Michigan

Located twenty miles north of Detroit, the Bloomfield Hills and Birmingham area offers the cultural activities of a metropolitan area and the serenity of a historic setting. The Cranbrook campus is less than an hour's driving distance of downtown Detroit, rural Michigan farmland and the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, two of the country's premier public universities. The Detroit metropolitan area is the eleventh largest in the country with more than 4.5 million residents. Beyond Detroit, the region is vibrant and diverse, with a rich mix of cultures and demographics. In addition to its white, African American, and Hispanic populations, the region has the one of the largest Arabic populations outside the Middle East. The Detroit metropolitan area's importance as a hub of the global auto industry and as a growing center of technology has drawn large populations of residents from Asia, South Asia, and Europe to the region.

The Detroit metropolitan area boasts more than twenty institutions of higher learning; fourteen museums and cultural centers; a symphony, opera, jazz festival, and arts festival; a wide range of arenas; professional sports teams in football, hockey, baseball, and basketball; and more theater seats than any city east of the Mississippi River other than New York City. Economists recently noted that Michigan has moved into the early stages of a sustained recovery and are predicting net job growth for the state for the next three years. In addition, planners around the world have become captivated by the idea of Detroit as a laboratory for ideas to "right-size" older cities.

In addition, a renewed creative community is strongly present in the city, exemplified by the many art studios, cooperative spaces, galleries, and creative businesses. Many of Cranbrook's graduates are a part of this new wave of artist-led enterprise which is attracting national and international attention to the role of the creative community in revitalizing Detroit.

The State of Michigan enjoys a glorious natural landscape, especially the vast lakes that give it the nickname The Third Coast.

The Role

This is a newly-formed role, as the Board of Trustees and senior leadership are prioritizing and investing in a more strategic, robust, creative, and cohesive communications function to better serve the needs of the Cranbrook community today and for years to come. This is an opportunity for a leader to join at a key inflection point, in an inaugural role, supporting the breadth of excellence across Cranbrook, with a wealth of compelling programs, alumni, and events to celebrate, and the chance to work in partnership with Advancement on the storytelling for an upcoming capital campaign.

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Reporting to the President, Aime Claire Roche – while serving on and working in close collaboration with the CEC leadership team – the Chief Communications Officer will serve as one of the institution's senior-most leaders, with direct responsibility for overseeing all aspects of enhancing, promoting, and protecting the Cranbrook community's reputation, public profile, and brand. This includes managing enterprise-wide internal and external communications strategy and implementation, while supporting and ensuring consistency and communications among the various programs, departments and divisions across the institution.

Acting as an organizational strategist first and foremost, this Chief Communications Officer will contribute to critical, broader institutional plans, and stemming from that, develop an over-arching communications strategy that aligns with the organizational vision, effectively incorporating and balancing institutional and departmental elements. They will effectively serve all internal and external constituents and do so with an understanding of CEC's collective strengths and aspirations. In support of this, they will also ensure clear structures, systems and processes are in place and operationally sound, further building trust and credibility across the Cranbrook community by working effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively with critical partners.

Functionally, this Chief Communications Officer will put forward a clear vision for communications in the service of guiding, refining, and successfully conveying the overall institutional vision, values, programs and impact. They will ensure an integrated communications approach, effectively considering and tailoring approaches for a diverse range of audiences and objectives. They will produce excellent written communications and will be responsible for the full scope of media, PR, digital, website, and internal communications. This leader must also maintain effective issues and crisis management, doing so through clarity of processes, training of departmental partners, and exercising sound judgment (informed by data and experience).

This person will oversee a talented team of six leaders across the Cranbrook community, including the Directors of Communication at Cranbrook Schools, Academy of Art and Art Museum, the Manager of Communications supporting the President's Office, Center for Collections and Research, and House and Gardens and digital marketing and social media coordinators. They will partner with program area colleagues, and ultimately oversee the services of designers, photographers and other vendors in the production of communications materials. This person will need to operate with diplomacy and care across all respective programs, effectively communicating the why behind certain approaches while simultaneously inviting feedback.

This person will lead the ongoing development of the team, providing guidance, support and resources, and ensuring that structure and expertise are aligned with strategy. They will support team building and diversity (across a range of dimensions), through an empowering, inclusive, collaborative approach.

Specific responsibilities include:

Strategic leadership

- Operating as a true organizational leader, demonstrating an understanding of Cranbrook's underlying goals and strategy, providing input even beyond core functional competencies.
- Develop deep internal relationships with a finger on the pulse of organizational priorities. Serve as a critical, sought-after leader and counselor throughout Cranbrook, at all levels.
- Operating as a thought leader, brainstorm partner and sounding board for all collaborators.
- Creating a global, long-term, forward-looking communications and marketing strategy that aligns with and helps drive the overall organizational objectives, outcomes and reputation. This person will provide strategic leadership in public relations matters, and in all media including social media, print, advertising, and logo management, to Program Area Directors and Directors / Managers of Communications and coordinate the internal and external messaging of all CEC program areas while integrating the objectives of the Cranbrook community.
- Driving integrated brand innovation; fostering an innovative culture and cutting-edge initiatives across the Cranbrook brand. Providing forward-thinking strategy, brand and planning derived from consumer-centric research, as well as creative thinking.
- Turning the strategy into clear, actionable plans with regularly monitored and measured deliverables, and then reporting on outcomes to create awareness and invite inquiry into specific initiatives.

- Developing an integrated, coordinated approach to communications and marketing across the enterprise, ensuring specific support to programs and cross-functional partners, while striving for consistency of message and coordinated initiatives that best showcase Cranbrook community strengths.

Functional Expertise

- Planning and executing a broad range of strategic brand efforts to promote Cranbrook's mission, culture, and priorities to relevant stakeholders.
- Overseeing a strategic approach to external relationship building where Cranbrook's role and value are clearly understood by industry leaders, partners, and the general public.
- Honing the overall narrative, defining key messages and ensuring clear and consistent delivery. Leading brand building efforts to help define the brand strategy, high-level narrative and messaging pillars, and voice. This leader will help drive a cohesive message and will continue to celebrate what is unique and distinct across the Cranbrook programs.
- Protecting and elevating the Cranbrook brand. Overseeing branding and visual identity standards, including approval of branded materials across a wide range of stakeholders.
- Managing and protecting reputation, both through proactive "trust building" efforts and effective issues and crisis training (and in-the-moment management).
- Seeking out and securing earned media and identifying opportunities to be featured in new external channels.
- Building and strengthening relationships with local and regional outlets, creating mutually beneficial partnerships and creating a mindset of Cranbrook being a "first call" when features are being crafted.
- Developing and implementing cohesive internal communications plans and tactics that educate a diverse set of stakeholders and provides critical details for employees to serve as ambassadors.
- Providing guidelines to cross-functional partners and markets to ensure consistency of execution in communication and marketing efforts.
- Constantly elevating the institution's written and visual representation via clear, world-class content.
- Leading the development and implementation of a brand guide and positioning statements.

Team leadership & mentorship

- Attracting, developing, motivating and retaining an outstanding, diverse, high-performing group of professionals through effective recruitment, training, development, and succession planning.
- Leading and coaching direct reports to ensure that communications and marketing practices are promoted within their area of responsibility and used to deliver enhanced capability and performance.
- Actively managing the performance of direct reports; through skills and needs assessments, creating an environment that encourages creativity and collaboration.
- Ensuring that activities undertaken, and decisions made within the area of responsibility are consistent with and are informed by available research and measurement information, creating an evidence-based approach to communications.
- Modeling and encouraging a customer service orientation for internal and external stakeholders, seeking to understand the needs of and opportunities from colleagues, alumni, board members, and partners.
- Supporting direct reports in identifying new systems, tools, or processes that can enhance their strategies and products.

Candidate Profile

First and foremost, this must be an individual with a deep belief in Cranbrook's mission and an enthusiasm for the community, along with an abiding commitment to operating according to the institution's vision and values. This person does not necessarily need experience in any one of the programs; however, an understanding of the unique nature of Cranbrook, and experience in analogous and similarly-complex institutions will be critical. Experience in a highly visible, regarded, and well-known organization will also be important, ideally those with ambitious goals to raise visibility, awareness, and impact.

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As an organizational leader, this person must be an accomplished professional with a reputation for having been a driving force in building or enhancing strategic communications and marketing capabilities within an organization. They must have credibility across all relevant dimensions – internal and external communications, marketing, advertising, creative, content – though proactive communications and marketing are the most critical expertise.

Functionally, this person is a multichannel communicator, demonstrating equal comfort and expertise in digital and traditional platforms; a big-picture thinker who keeps institutional strategy and priorities top of mind; and an insightful and creative synthesizer, able to distill and communicate key messages across audiences. This person will be able to successfully navigate a highly matrixed organization with the capacity to engage simultaneously at the institutional and departmental levels. They will have deep experience translating complex, often challenging ideas and concepts into compelling stories for both general audiences and internal constituents. They must also be adept at navigating the terms of and participating in public dialogue about significant issues of our times and understanding when to engage proactively and responsively in that conversation.

This inaugural Chief Communications Officer will be a senior, credible executive counselor and bring a style that allows them to act decisively, with conviction (including in crises) – while being a collaborative, flexible team player. This individual will be a creative, passionate self-starter who is comfortable leading initiatives from inception through successful execution, owning both the “big picture” and “the details.” They will be a “doer” who is hands-on, execution-oriented, and able to function in a rapidly changing external environment. This requires a high degree of initiative and creativity, and the ability to manage multiple tasks, work under pressure, and meet deadlines. This leader will come with a track record of leading successful change management and seeing teams and organizations through evolution and change. The ideal candidate will need credibility, gravitas, executive presence, and influencing skills to operate at all levels of Cranbrook, bringing strategies to life and ensuring buy-in for all efforts. This leader will be able to “show” not just “tell” how operating more as a collective benefits the institution and the individual colleagues.

This is someone who is comfortable in the spotlight, but equally effective behind the scenes; able to manage up, and equally effective leading teams and influencing peers; and has the capacity to balance the passion of a mission-oriented organization with the pragmatism required to effectively lead this function. The Chief Communications Officer will serve as a catalyst for the institution, helping both internal and external audiences to understand the successes, direction, and true leadership and excellence of Cranbrook.

To summarize, in terms of the most critical experiences and competencies, Cranbrook will look for:

- **Strategic leadership:** operating as a strategist and counselor at the senior-most levels of a complex, unique organization with distinct initiatives, providing clarity of vision (aligning institutional and functional priorities), credible advice, and a collaborative, yet decisive approach
- **Functional expertise:** developing creative, integrated communications/marketing plans that incorporate institutional/programmatic promotion, issues, and crisis management, and a sophisticated blend of traditional media, digital media and content, and a diverse range of engagement strategies and tools
- **Team leadership:** inspiring the team to be innovative, creative, collaborative and attempt new strategies to continue the growth and learning of the team and to best serve Cranbrook as an institution
- **Relevant institutional & sectoral insights:** management of the above elements in a highly-visible, recognized institution (bringing both the positive assets and associated reputational threats); at least appreciation for education and the arts and experience managing similarly-complex subject matter

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Setting Strategy

- The ability to create and articulate an inspiring vision for the organization. Engages in critical thinking and understands complex situations.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the ecosystem. Displays imaginative thinking and openness to novelty and change.

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- The ability to effectively balance the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of how much change the organization is capable of handling, to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful.
- The inclination to seek and analyze data from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the organization's overall strategy. Makes well thought-out decisions, taking ownership for outcomes.

Executing for Results

- The ability to set clear and challenging goals while committing the organization to improved performance; tenacious and accountable in driving results. Demonstrates resilience and manages pressure effectively.
- Track record maintaining a learning-focused mindset; seeks continual self-improvement to deeply master one's role and responsibilities
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the agility to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations.
- A risk-taker who seeks data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended circumstances from decisions; someone who takes smart risks.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always considering what is best for the organization. Identifies opportunities to support and improve the organization.
- A leader who has experience in having the authority to make key decisions regarding the internal communications as well as external message and external communications in accordance with the established mission and goals of the Community.
- Track record of high level of independent judgment and problem-solving skills.
- Track record of successful change management and helping organizations evolve.

Leading Teams

- The ability to attract, recruit, develop and retain top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance, while advocating for its members.
- Supports and encourages employee growth through formal and informal means. Widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges, and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to higher standards, which commands respect from followers.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

Relationships and Influence

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through compelling influence, powerful charisma, passion in their beliefs, and active drive. Energizes and influences others to achieve ambitious outcomes.
- Given the various programs within the community, this person must have good judgment, confidentiality, and tact.
- Promotes teamwork, cooperation, and group cohesion. Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Creates a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates followership beyond their own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization.

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