



## Director of Marketing and Communications

*Full-Time | Chicago, Illinois*

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### Description

Merit School of Music seeks a collaborative, strategic, and hands-on Director of Marketing & Communications to lead a small but high-impact team responsible for advancing Merit's brand, supporting student recruitment, and strengthening donor and community engagement. The Director develops and executes an annual marketing and communications strategy that reflects Merit's mission to remove barriers to high-quality music education and celebrates the diversity, creativity, and potential of young people across Chicago.

Reporting to the Vice President for Development & Marketing and supervising two staff members, the Director is both a strategist and an active practitioner. They oversee multi-channel recruitment campaigns; guide the organization's digital presence across web, email, and social media; manage paid advertising and vendor relationships; and partner closely with Program, Student Services, and Development to ensure clear, accurate, and compelling communications throughout the year. The Director helps create transparent, predictable marketing processes and fosters a collaborative, two-way working culture with Merit's Program, Student Services, and Development teams. The Director also leads major institutional storytelling efforts—including the annual report, blog posts, etc.—and helps ensure that all external messaging upholds Merit's dignity-centered, equity-driven approach.

The ideal candidate is an innovative and collaborative marketing professional who can balance big-picture thinking with day-to-day execution. They bring strength in content creation, digital marketing, and campaign planning, along with the ability to coordinate across departments, coach staff, and manage multiple projects with clarity and care. Above all, they are energized by Merit's mission and committed to creating communications that welcome, inform, and inspire the diverse communities we serve.

### Organizational Overview

Merit School of Music is a community music school located in Chicago's West Loop. Our primary goals are to help young people transform their lives and experience personal growth through music by providing access to sustained participation. For more than 40 years, we have been home to a diverse community of talented young musicians and have served as a springboard for them to achieve their full musical and personal potential. Our 125 passionate and experienced teaching artists provide access to high-quality music education, engaging over 3,000 students annually at our downtown location and in area schools and community centers.

Our students, who reflect Chicago's socioeconomic and ethnic diversity, have the rare opportunity to learn together, dream together, teach each other, and broaden their horizons as they build inspiring lives through music. Merit develops musicians and equips young people with the tools they need to excel in life; virtually 100 percent of our graduates attend conservatories or colleges.

Merit School of Music is committed to building a world where historically underrepresented groups can attain access to quality music education. Simultaneously, Merit is working to become an organization that truly reflects the city's demographics and the students we serve. Merit is dedicated to being an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and anti-racist organization and continually examining our efforts in this area.

## Reporting Relationship

The Director of Marketing and Communications reports to the Vice President for Development and Marketing.

## Job Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Director of Marketing & Communications include, but are not limited to:

### Strategy Development & Implementation - approx. 20%

- Lead Merit's annual marketing and communications strategy so it supports enrollment, fundraising, and overall brand health.
- Translate high-level goals into clear plans and timelines, keeping the Program, Student Services, and Development departments informed and involved.
- Guide major storytelling projects, ensuring content reflects Merit's mission, impact, and IDEA commitments.
- Shape Merit's brand voice and visual identity across all channels.
- Establish and refine clear, predictable marketing workflows, including request intake, timelines, and review/approval processes, to support smooth collaboration across departments.
- Coordinate annual and seasonal planning cycles with internal partners to align messaging, milestones, and capacity.
- Manage influencer and community-facing visibility partnerships, as appropriate.
- Communicate what responsibilities Marketing owns and where it plays a supporting role, ensuring colleagues understand how to engage with the team and what to expect during major planning cycles.

### Recruitment Marketing - approx. 35%

- Develop and lead multi-channel recruitment campaigns that speak to Merit's diverse communities and support program and student services' enrollment goals.
- Own and oversee email marketing, including segmentation, nurturing flows, and registration-cycle communications.
- Ensure website content and SEO make it easy for families to find accurate, timely, and welcoming program information.
- Direct and implement Merit's organic social media strategy, guiding content that reflects student voices, program needs, and community pride.
- Support concerts and key program events with coordinated messaging and marketing materials that reflect enrollment and community-building goals.
- Collaborate with Program and Student Services to align recruitment messaging, deadlines, and communication milestones with programmatic and registration timelines and frontline insights.
- Tailor messaging for Merit's different locations and communities in collaboration with Program, Student Services, and community advisors.

### Advertising - approx. 15%

- Plan and manage digital and traditional advertising, balancing evergreen and seasonal needs, keeping campaigns aligned with organizational goals and budgets
- Oversee and coordinate with paid media vendors and consultants for campaign builds, optimization, analytics, and asset development.
- Monitor performance data and adjust strategies based on enrollment trends and return on investment.
- Create and edit clear and compelling advertising materials that align with Merit's brand and priorities.

### **Fundraising Communications - approx. 15%**

- Partner with Development to create messaging and materials that support donor engagement, appeals, stewardship, events, and the annual report.
- Establish predictable timelines and checkpoints in line with annual communications calendar.
- Produce or refine impact stories and donor-centered content that reflect student and family experiences.
- Ensure fundraising communications are consistent with brand and recruitment messaging.

### **Budget & Team Leadership - approx. 15%**

- Provide steady, supportive leadership to two marketing department staff members through coaching, clear expectations setting, delegation, and feedback.
- Manage the marketing and communications budget, including paid media, consultants, and creative resources.
- Track spending and evaluate the effectiveness of marketing investments.
- Manage external vendors and creative partners to ensure timely, high-quality work.

## **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

### **Requirements**

- Experience developing and implementing marketing and communications strategies that support enrollment, fundraising, and brand goals in a mission-driven setting.
- Strong digital marketing skills, including email segmentation/automation, web content management, SEO fundamentals, and social media strategy.
- Experience managing multi-channel campaigns and overseeing digital advertising (Google, Meta, or similar platforms).
- Excellent writing and editing skills, with the ability to translate programmatic and impact information into clear, compelling content for varied audiences.
- Strong project management abilities: managing multiple priorities, delegating effectively, and maintaining predictable timelines.
- Experience supervising or coaching staff and supporting their professional growth.
- Ability and desire to work collaboratively with the Program, Student Services, and Development departments, incorporating their insights into messaging and planning.
- Comfort with marketing technologies such as CRMs, email platforms, CMS tools, and analytics dashboards.
- A commitment to dignity-centered communication and the ability to connect with diverse communities.

### **Preferred but not required:**

- Experience producing donor-facing communications.
- Comfort with simple graphic design or managing external creative support.
- Experience coordinating vendors or consultants (web, PPC, branding, etc.).
- Familiarity with HubSpot or willingness to learn quickly.
- Experience in music, arts education, youth development, or nonprofit settings.
- Experience connecting across a breadth of Chicago neighborhoods and people

## **Educational and Experiential Requirements**

- Bachelor's degree in marketing, communications, journalism, public relations, arts administration, or a related field; equivalent professional experience will also be considered.
- At least two years of supervisory experience.
- 7-10 years of progressively responsible experience in marketing, communications, or a closely related field, including experience managing campaigns and content across multiple channels.

## Schedule

- This is a full-time, overtime-exempt position.
- Please plan to work in person at Merit at least two to three days per week; additional in-person work is welcome and occasionally required for events and meetings. Partial work-from-home schedules can be flexible and coordinated with the Vice President for Development & Marketing.
- The successful candidate should have a flexible schedule to attend evening and weekend events/concerts/meetings as necessary (and with plenty of advance notice).

## Compensation

Merit offers a comprehensive employee benefits package, including the following items:

- Compensation is commensurate with experience and based on a yearly starting salary of \$90,000.
- You will be eligible to participate in Merit's employee benefits package on the first of the month following 30 days of employment.
- Merit offers a robust healthcare package, including BCBS medical (HMO and PPO options), Delta Dental (HMO and PPO), employee-paid EyeMed vision care, and voluntary life insurance coverage.
- One day of paid time off (PTO) earned each month in the first year (increases each anniversary) and seven paid holidays in addition to a paid winter break (approximately one week).
- 401(k) eligibility begins on the first day of the new calendar quarter following one year of employment.

Further information on Merit's benefits package and employee policies is available on request.

## How to Apply

To apply, please upload your resume detailing your relevant experience and qualifications for this role [using this link](#). Applications will be accepted through **January 4, 2026**. Materials should be compatible with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF. Interviews will be provided for finalists.

ALAANA/BIPOC people, trans and gender-nonconforming people, and women are encouraged to apply.

For more information about Merit School of Music, please visit [www.meritmusic.org](http://www.meritmusic.org).

Merit School of Music is committed to enhancing the diversity of our musical community, recognizing that by providing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for our students, we are preparing them for personal and professional success in an increasingly multicultural and global society. The Merit community recognizes its responsibility to create and sustain a learning environment where difference is valued and equity and inclusion are practiced.