



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Vice President, Marketing and Communications Leadership Profile

Spring 2025



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

[Texas Southern University](#) (Texas Southern) seeks an experienced and visionary leader to serve as its inaugural Vice President, Marketing and Communications (VPMC). Reporting to [President James W. Crawford III](#), the VPMC will oversee its centralized marketing and communication division and implement comprehensive marketing, communications, and public relations strategies to advance the university's mission, enhance its brand, and support its strategic goals. The vice president will oversee all aspects of its marketing, media relations, internal and external communications, and community engagement to promote the university's academic programs, research initiatives, and community services.

Previously, the divisions of marketing and communications were organized under the larger umbrella of "University Advancement". President Crawford has strategically uncoupled the organizations with investments in each division to achieve the university's greatest ambitions. The president has elevated the cabinet position to a vice president title and committed resources to grow the unit significantly in the near term to ensure appropriate resources and staffing for the Division of Marketing and Communications.

With over 8,500 students, Texas Southern offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate programs across [10 colleges and schools](#). This robust offering is supported by 1,400 faculty and staff and an energetic alumni network of educators, entrepreneurs, public servants, lawyers, artists, and more. President Crawford seeks a Vice President to tell the story of this trailblazing institution at a time of exciting distinction, honor, and pride. Recently, Texas Southern was awarded the recognition of a 2024 -2025 College of Distinction, a prestigious honor highlighting its unwavering commitment to providing an exceptional undergraduate education, and in February 2025, the university's debate team won the 35th Annual International Forensics Association's Speech and Debate Tournament in Incheon, South Korea.

President Crawford arrived at Texas Southern University in the summer of 2024, bringing great momentum and renewed energy. Having served in global leadership roles for six U.S. Presidents, Crawford previously served as president of Felician University in New Jersey, and having served in the United States Navy for more than 30 years, retiring as a Vice Admiral and its 43rd Judge Advocate General (JAG). As the institution embarks upon the celebration of its 100-year anniversary, President Crawford seeks a leader to work collaboratively with the university's faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners to elevate the institution's commitment to mission, tell the remarkable story of its history and impact, and elevate the visibility of its academic and research agenda to new heights. The VPMC will be deeply committed to meeting the needs of 21st-century students prepared to evolve into lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and visionary leaders who make a global impact.

In addition to the academic and research messaging, the VPMC will partner with the Vice President of Development and Alumni Engagement to promote stories about the power of philanthropy through programs, like the *Texas Southern Tiger Promise*, which will cover tuition and mandatory fees for in-state students from families with incomes below \$125,000. This groundbreaking program dismantles financial barriers and opens doors of opportunity for countless future Tigers. Behind every donation are remarkable stories of resilience for students who are transforming their lives through education. The VPMC will also work with the Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics to enhance the Texas Southern Tigers athletics program, part of the Southwestern Athletic Conference, and the flashy and pacesetting Ocean of Soul Marching Band, which has been a point of pride of the university since its founding in 1969.

The university's rich culture, innovation, research, entrepreneurship, and community engagement continue to capture the world's attention. The VPMC will capitalize on the strengths of a centralized [Division of Marketing & Communications](#) and align with a long-term and dynamic vision for the university's future. The VPMC is responsible for developing and executing fully integrated data-driven marketing and communications strategies that elevate Texas Southern's visibility and reputation while driving student recruitment and yield.

The VPMC will be a strategic leader, strong team player, builder, and partner, and highly adept at leading through influence, empathy, and consensus-building. The VPMC must be able to provide both content expertise and disciplinary strength and have broad conceptual knowledge about the challenges facing higher education today. This is a leader who can "see around corners" and anticipate the needs of a complex university of similar size and scope, particularly related to enrollment and yield.

The VPMC and their team will be responsible for measuring the impact of their work to increase regional, national, and global awareness and the reputation of Texas Southern, and serve as a sector leader in higher education marketing. The VPMC will also strategically coordinate the university's approach to major announcements, developments, crisis and reputational response, an effective and transparent internal communications strategy, and other strategic initiatives.

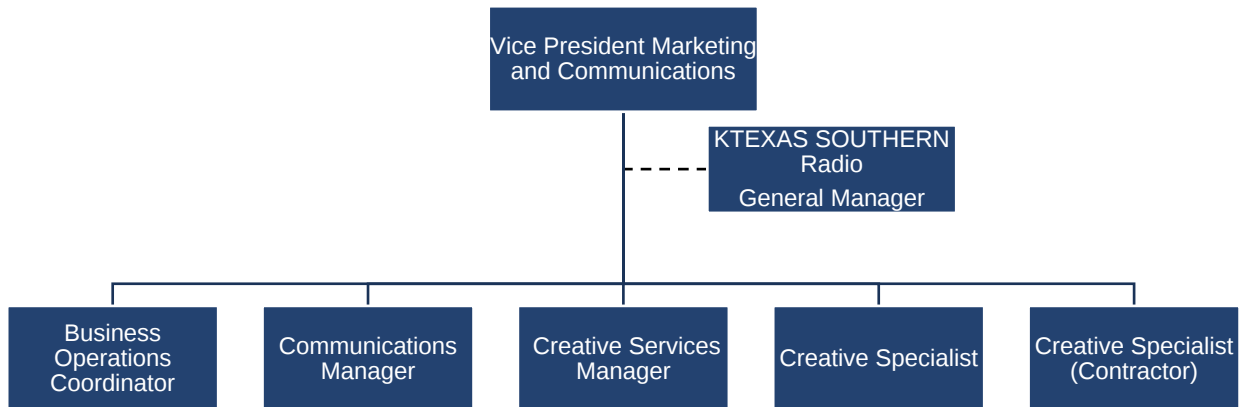
The vice president will have a minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible, multi-faceted experience in marketing, communications, and public relations, with at least five (5) years in a senior leadership role and a bachelor's degree in marketing, communications, public relations, or a related field. A master's degree is preferred. Additionally, the VPMC will have demonstrated experience developing and executing successful marketing and communications strategies in a higher education setting or a similarly complex organization.

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 Vice President, Marketing and Communications

The Vice President, Marketing and Communications (VPMC) reports to the President of Texas Southern University (Texas Southern) and serves as the chief marketing and communications officer for the university. The VPMC is responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive marketing, communications, and public relations strategies to advance the university's mission, promote and protect its brand, and support the university's strategic goals. The VPMC oversees all aspects of Texas Southern University's marketing, media relations, internal and external communications, and community engagement to promote the university's programs, brand identity, research initiatives, and service to the community. The VPMC partners with the President and senior leadership team on internal/external marketing and communications strategies to support the development of a long-term strategic vision for Texas Southern.

The VPMC provides leadership to the [Division of Marketing & Communications](#) to promote the mission, protect and enhance the reputation, and advance the vision of Texas Southern University through the development and engagement of strategic marketing and communications initiatives. The vice president leads a centralized team of five marketing and communications professionals and manages the associated resources dedicated to supporting and protecting the mission and vision of the division and the university.



Duties and Responsibilities:

- Develops and implements a comprehensive marketing and communications strategic plan with a forward-thinking approach to anticipate and leverage emerging trends in marketing and communications aligned with the university's mission and goals, including strategic enrollment and fundraising.
- Oversees the development and maintenance of the university's brand identity, ensuring positive storytelling and creating narratives that highlight the institution's strengths and achievements with consistency across all platforms and communications.
- Serves as the primary spokesperson for the university, cultivating relationships with journalists and media outlets, managing media inquiries and press releases, and developing and executing crisis communication plans to manage issues and protect the university's reputation.
- Leads digital marketing initiatives, including the university website, social media, email marketing, and online advertising campaigns, and supervises the creation of high-quality content for various channels, including digital and print publications, websites, social media, and video productions to build relationships with community organizations, government agencies, and other external partners to enhance the university's visibility and impact.

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- Enhances internal communication efforts to ensure transparency engagement among faculty, staff and students.
 - Establishes and monitors key performance indicators (KPIs) and return on investment (ROI) to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and communications initiatives, leading and mentoring a team of marketing and communications professionals to foster a collaborative and innovative work environment.
 - Develops and manages the marketing and communications budget, ensuring efficient allocation of resources.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The Vice President, Marketing and Communications (VPMC) represents and promotes the university, increasing its visibility and supporting the institution's mission, vision, and goals while leading the development of the university's brand vision, strategy, and marketing campaigns to create a distinct positioning and identity, attract the best students, motivate alumni and donors, and recruit high-quality faculty and staff. The VPMC will serve as a key partner to enrollment management and other key constituents across campus to leverage the university's strengths and history to further advance the mission of Texas Southern University.

In addition, the VPMC will be expected to make significant strides towards these institutional initiatives in their first 12 – 18 months in the role.

- **Marketing and Communications Strategic Plan and Visioning:** The VPMC will support the establishment of the university's marketing and communications strategic plan by leading the development of a cohesive strategy that aligns with the institution's goals and values. The VPMC should conduct market research, analyze trends, and gather stakeholder input to inform the plan. By articulating a clear vision, they ensure that all marketing efforts consistently reflect the university's brand identity and mission.
- **Institutional Messaging:** The VPMC will eloquently narrate the university's history and message by highlighting its founding principles, significant milestones, and transformative achievements. The VPMC will emphasize the institution's commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and community impact, weaving in stories of notable alumni, groundbreaking research, and cultural contributions. Through compelling storytelling, the VPMC will convey the university's vision and values, inspiring pride and support among stakeholders, and fostering a deep connection to its legacy and future aspirations. Additionally, they foster collaboration across departments to create unified messaging that resonates with prospective students, alumni, and the broader community.
- **Enrollment Marketing, Yield, and Retention Strategy:** In partnership with the Office of Student Enrollment Success, the VPMC will develop and execute marketing strategies to attract, recruit, and retain students. This includes building brand awareness, creating targeted campaigns, and showcasing the university's unique selling points. The VPMC will engage prospective students through virtual tours, webinars, and personalized communication, while collaborating with influencers to share authentic experiences. Additionally, they promote student support services, foster community through clubs and events, and maintain continuous engagement via newsletters and social media updates. The goal is to ensure students choose the university and remain committed throughout their academic journey.
- **University Website:** The VPMC will facilitate the design and optimization of the Texas Southern University website by ensuring it is visually appealing, user-friendly, and reflective of the institution's brand identity. They will prioritize intuitive navigation, engaging content, and responsive design to enhance the user experience and incorporate SEO best practices to improve the website's visibility and accessibility. Additionally, the VPMC will integrate multimedia elements, such as videos and virtual tours, to showcase campus life and academic offerings. The goal is to create a compelling digital front door that attracts and informs prospective students, alumni, and other stakeholders.

- **Leadership & Team Development:** The VPMC will mentor, guide, retain, and develop their team by fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. They will provide regular feedback, professional development opportunities, and clear career pathways to help team members grow. By encouraging innovation and recognizing achievements, they will boost morale and motivation. Additionally, they will facilitate open communication and teamwork, ensuring that each member feels valued and empowered to contribute to the university's marketing and communications goals.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Minimum Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in marketing, communications, public relations, or a related field.
- A minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible, multifaceted experience in marketing, communications, and public relations, with at least five (5) years in a senior leadership role.
- Demonstrated experience in developing and executing successful marketing and communications strategies in a higher education setting or a similarly complex organization.

Preferred Qualifications

- Master's degree in marketing, communications, public Relations, or a related field.
- Proven track record of enhancing brand visibility and reputation in a higher education environment.
- Familiarity with the challenges and opportunities unique to higher education marketing.
- Experience with crisis communication and issues management.
- Experience in developing and executing successful marketing campaigns that drive enrollment, fundraising, and community engagement.
- Strong understanding of digital marketing trends and best practices.
- Exceptional public speaking and presentation skills.
- Ability to think strategically and creatively to solve complex problems.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

In addition, the university seeks a leader with the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- Knowledge and interest in higher education, Texas Southern University's mission and priorities, and international affairs.
- An effective interpersonal style and people-to-people skills: the ability to interact with a wide range of people.
- The flexibility and judgment to handle fluid situations, shifting priorities, and tight deadlines.
- Strong self-motivation, with the demonstrated ability to work effectively independently and as part of a team.

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- A general understanding of the organizational structure and governance of the university and the division of responsibilities between the various bodies by which the university is governed, including the external context in which the university operates.
 - Must possess excellent interpersonal skills and demonstrate strong service.
 - Strong analytical skills: the ability to do independent research, conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis, and formulate recommendations.
 - Possess information management skills - able to identify, compile, access, and assess information and data effectively to deliver information requirements as requested by a variety of internal and external stakeholders.
 - Must have excellent research skills focusing on web-based research and statistical analysis.
 - Excellent oral and written communication skills, including proficiency in public/promotional speaking and the ability to write effectively, authentically, and in a manner consistent with the quality and standard expected of university-level communications.
 - High degree of accuracy requiring detailed orientated individual.
 - Excellent communication skills including strong writing skills and ability to concisely summarize qualitative and quantitative information.
 - Demonstrated ability to develop targeted communications for specific audiences.
 - Excellent skills in office IT systems and current business application software.
 - Fluency in a second language is desirable.
 - Delegate effectively and hold direct reports accountable.
 - Listen carefully and effectively, analyzing complex inputs and concisely communicating a plan of action that inspires involvement.
 - Travel frequently, including overnight travel.
 - Develop strong cross-functional teams to foster teamwork.

About Texas Southern University

Overview

Since its inception in 1927, Texas Southern has been highly regarded as a premier producer of talent. It has grown from 300 students in its first summer to serving approximately 8,700 students today. Texas Southern's student body represents a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including family educational history (39% are first-generation students), socioeconomic status (72% are Pell-eligible students), and nationality (2% are international).

Texas Southern is a comprehensive doctoral university offering a broad academic portfolio with over 100 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and concentrations organized into ten academic colleges and schools. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Texas Southern honors its designation as a special-purpose institution for urban programming and research. Texas Southern is one of 13 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to hold the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's coveted status as a Doctoral University of High Research Activity (R2). Its research prowess is demonstrated by grant awards increasing 48% over the past two fiscal years. The short-term goals are strategically focused on increasing student enrollment as well as strengthening funding that supports the University's endowment and research areas.

In 2022, the Board of Regents announced a 10-year vision and TSUPROUD initiative to articulate the university's core values. It is through those core values that the Board of Regents believe Texas Southern can reach both short- and long-term goals. The short-term goals include growth in student enrollment to 10,000, a \$125 million endowment, and \$50 million in research awards by 2027. The long-term goals include a \$250 million endowment, \$100 million in research awards, and three branch campuses by 2032. Texas Southern's 150-acre campus is nestled in the heart of Houston's historic Third Ward, just minutes from downtown. The Texas Southern Tigers have women's and men's teams competing in intercollegiate athletics at the NCAA Division I FCS level. Texas Southern has been a member of the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) since 1954.

Leadership

James W. Crawford, III, Vice Admiral, JAGC, U.S. Navy (Retired)



James W. Crawford III, Vice Admiral, JAGC, U.S. Navy (Retired), is the 14th President of Texas Southern University (Texas Southern). He was appointed by the Texas Southern Board of Regents in May 2024. Crawford is a decorated veteran, strategic planner and decision-maker, academic leader, collaborator, and problem solver governed by three guiding principles: faith, family, and service.

Crawford was appointed by President Obama as the 43rd Judge Advocate General of the Navy. He served as the principal military legal counsel to the Secretary of the Navy and Chief of Naval Operations, and the Department of Defense Representative for Ocean Policy Affairs (REPOPA). He also led over 2,300 attorneys, enlisted paralegals, and civilian employees of the worldwide Navy JAG Corps community.

A 1979 student-athlete graduate of Belmont Abbey College, he was commissioned through the JAG Corps Student Program in 1983, following graduation from the University of North Carolina School of Law at Chapel Hill. He later earned a Master of Laws degree (Ocean and Coastal Law) from the University of Miami School of Law and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College. In 2008, he was named an MIT Seminar XXI Fellow.

Crawford previously served as a consultant on International Humanitarian Law for Palantir Technologies for developing artificial intelligence solutions to improve protections for civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflict. From 2020 to 2023, he served as the first male president of Felician University, a 2,100-student Roman Catholic university in Lodi and Rutherford, NJ. He is well-recognized for steering the University through the COVID-19 pandemic and securing \$17 million in grants for university capital improvements, including expansion of the University's technology infrastructure and STEM programming while delivering a premium educational experience to the underserved and first-generation student population of New Jersey. As president, Crawford reenergized the staff and faculty by restructuring the executive leadership team, increasing faculty involvement in university affairs, and establishing a Staff Assembly to operate as part of the shared governance apparatus of the institution. He also completely rebuilt and revitalized the University's relationship with the Borough of Rutherford Mayor, City Council and Chief of Police.

Prior to arriving at Felician, Crawford served as Chairman of the Bishop's Advisory Council on Racism for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, VA, from 2019 to 2022 and drafted the charter for the organization. He is a member of the Board of Directors for the Scholarship Fund for Inner-City Children, Arch Diocese of Newark, NJ, and is serving his second three-year term on the Board of Trustees for Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, NC. He also served as an inaugural member of the Council of Presidents, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges from 2022 to 2023. Initially a plenary member of the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey, he later served on the Executive Committee from 2021 to 2023.

Crawford's distinguished naval service includes Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Navy and Commander of the Naval Legal Service Command, where he led the judge advocates, enlisted paralegals, and civilian employees of 14 Navy commands worldwide from 2012 to 2015; served as Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2007-2011, and Commander of NATO Rule of Law Field Support Mission/Rule of Law Field Force - Afghanistan 2011-2012. Personal decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal for his service as the Judge Advocate General, a second Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal (three awards), the Legion of Merit (three awards), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (three awards), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. Crawford and his wife, Elizabeth, have twin teenage sons, Nicholas, and Alexander.

About Texas Southern University

The Greater Houston Area is the fourth most populous metropolitan area in the United States. Houston is home to the country's most diverse community, with no ethnic or racial majority, and the city welcomes people from across the nation and the world. Ranking third in the number of foreign consulates it houses, Houston is truly an international city. More than 90 languages are spoken in the Houston area.

One of only five American cities with resident professional companies in all four major performing arts — [ballet](#), [opera](#), [theater](#), and [symphony](#) — Houston also boasts professional [football](#), [baseball](#), [basketball](#), and [soccer](#) teams. The *New York Times* called Houston possibly the most interesting city in America for young artists. The Houston area contains more than 55,000 acres of parks, public green space, and open water. The Kemah Boardwalk and the city of Galveston on the Gulf Coast offer outdoor and water recreation. Businesses also recognize the allure of Houston's offerings. Twenty-five companies on the *Fortune 500* list call the Energy Capital of the World home. Aeronautic research is unsurpassed at NASA headquarters, and Texas Medical Center remains the largest in the world with 47 highly lauded research and treatment institutions. More information on Houston can be found here: <https://www.visithoustontexas.com/about-houston/>





Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Texas Southern University in this search. **Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by Tuesday, June 10th.** The position will remain open until an appointment is made.

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

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Melissa Fincher, Tyler Workman, and Christine J. Pendleton

TexasSouthernVPMarComm@wittkieffer.com

It is the policy of Texas Southern University to provide a work environment that is free from discrimination for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, individuals with disability, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status in its programs, activities, admissions or employment policies. This policy of equal opportunity is strictly observed in all University employment-related activities such as advertising, recruiting, interviewing, testing, employment training, compensation, promotion, termination, and employment benefits. This policy expressly prohibits harassment and discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, genetic history, national origin, individuals with disability, age, citizenship status, or protected veteran status. This policy shall be adhered to in accordance with the provisions of all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including, but not limited to, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.