Leadership Opportunity at Thaden School

Director of Communications

Bentonville, Arkansas

In July 2015, the Walton Family Foundation announced the founding of an independent school in Bentonville, Arkansas. Named in honor of Louise Thaden, a pioneering aviator born and raised in Bentonville, the school opened in the fall of 2017 and now serves approximately 220 students in Grades 6-11. At full scale, the school and will serve approximately 500-550 students in grades 6-12.

The school now seeks a Director of Communications to lead the development of a communications program that is closely aligned with its mission and that informs, inspires, and elevates the visibility of its programs and progress. Working with the Director of Institutional Advancement and the school’s leadership team, including the Founding Head of School, the Director will play an integral role in the growth of a vibrant, well-resourced school in a rapidly growing part of the United States.

The School and the Region

A non-sectarian independent school under the direction of its own board, Thaden School offers a challenging and innovative educational program that ignites in its students a passion for discovery and learning, prepares them to succeed in college, and inspires them to lead lives of integrity, purpose and responsible global citizenship.

At the core of the school’s mission is a commitment to balance that takes many forms: a curriculum that integrates the sciences and the humanities; indoor and outdoor teaching spaces where sustainability is a tangible part of the lesson; hands-on programs for civic engagement; athletics and physical education programs that build confidence and character through competition and meaningful participation; and a diverse faculty and staff that empower students to think deeply and expansively about their potential and place in the world. The school’s remarkably robust indexed tuition program further supports the creation of a balanced learning community where students of many perspectives, talents, and interests come together.

Located on a 30-acre campus in downtown Bentonville, the school is walking distance from the town square, Brightwater Culinary Institute, The Momentary (a center for contemporary arts), and a variety of other educational resources. With generous support from the Walton Family Foundation, the school has also engaged a nationally renowned team of architects to design an enduring and innovative campus that will spark curiosity, inspire creativity, and invite reflection. As featured in Architect magazine, the school’s first permanent buildings opened this fall with the doubling of its enrollment from 110 in AY 2018-19 to approximately 220 students in AY 2019-20. At full scale, the school will serve approximately 500 students.

With more than 500,000 residents, the region combines a thriving economy with the natural beauty of the Ozarks and a rich variety of cultural and recreational amenities such as the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Razorback Regional Greenway, the Scott Family Amazeum, and the Bentonville Film Festival. Northwest Arkansas is also home to the world headquarters of three Fortune 500 companies (Walmart, Tyson Foods, and J.B. Hunt) and the University of Arkansas.
For more information about the region and its national rankings, see Finding NWA and the website for the Northwest Arkansas Council.

The Thaden School website offers further information regarding its mission, leadership and faculty, educational programs, indexed tuition program, and campus plan.

The Position

Communications is central to the school’s mission and successful growth. Reporting to the Director of Institutional Advancement, the Director of Communications will organize and support all aspects of the school’s communications and marketing efforts.

The Director of Communications will undertake the following responsibilities:

- Develop and manage integrated program strategies and plans to advance brand awareness and reputation, locally and nationally;
- Create plans, proposals, reports, creative briefs, and other communication documents to support strategic plan and increase brand awareness;
- Oversee print and electronic media, including website content, regularly scheduled and ad hoc constituent outreach, press releases, advertising in local and national relocation and educational guides, and day to day contact with news media;
- Create and implement a digital media marketing plan;
- Collaborate with school leadership to write and distribute community newsletters;
- Manage messaging and process for crisis communications;
- Coordinate the creation and ordering of all branded merchandise for the Thaden community;
- Work with school leadership team to ensure that school events have appropriate marketing support, including invitations, collateral, and photos for sharing via appropriate digital channels;
- Organize, direct, and collaborate across teams to achieve specified results;
- Maintain routine contact with key school partners, seeking regular feedback on the program’s impact and performance;
- Develop relationships throughout Northwest Arkansas, and beyond the region, to advance the mission of the school;
- Work with Director of Institutional Advancement and Director of Finance and Operations to create and manage school’s communications and marketing budget;
- Keep current with industry and overall consumer marketing trends while advancing our presence in new media and marketing applications;
- Perform other duties in support of the school mission as determined by the Director of Institutional Advancement.

Experience and Qualifications

The school seeks candidates who have the drive, poise, and versatility to build a robust and effective communications program. The ideal candidate for this position will be:

- A writer who can create a wide range of content that brings the Thaden story to life;
• An ambassador who can be a great champion for the school’s mission, culture, and educational programs;
• A planner and a builder who can anticipate the needs of a rapidly growing school and advance strategies for meeting them;
• An administrator with strong organizational skills and attention to detail who can manage deadlines and deliver high-quality work product on time;
• An experienced social media strategist with ability to position leaders on online media outlets, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, podcasts or other digital platforms;
• A seasoned professional with communications and public relations expertise in progressively senior positions, preferably in a large, dynamic organization or an entrepreneurial environment.

Qualified candidates must have:

• Bachelor’s degree in Communications, English, Journalism, Marketing, Public Relations, or related field;
• Several years of experience in institutional communications or a related field (e.g., corporate or agency background in communications, public relations, integrated marketing, or digital communications);
• Strong communication and organizational skills, including exceptional writing skills, and facility with media of all forms (social, print, broadcast, etc.);
• Ability to prioritize and manage multiple responsibilities and deliver work on time, with careful attention to detail and accuracy;
• Commitment to meeting the highest standards of internal and external customer service;
• Broad knowledge of market and media solutions to make strategic recommendations and develop campaign concepts;
• Experience accomplishing integrated digital and traditional campaigns;
• Experience managing project financials, timelines and budgets;
• Motivation to speak about their commitment to and excitement for the mission of Thaden School;
• Understanding of the challenges and dynamics within a large and changing enterprise, including sensitivity to multicultural communication;
• Ability to connect with a variety of people and constituencies (e.g., faculty, parents, donors);
• Commitment to the school’s mission, especially its indexed tuition program;
• Proficiency in Microsoft Office, Google Suite, Adobe InDesign, as well as website platforms and content management systems (e.g., Blackbaud, Silverstripe CMS, Sendible, etc.) required.

Applications

Please submit applications to careers@thadenschool.org. Applications should include a cover letter, resume, and statement of educational philosophy. The start date is negotiable but must be no later than July 1, 2020. Thaden is an equal-opportunity employer and complies with all federal, state, and local laws that prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, national origin, citizenship, age (18 or older), religion, disability, marital status, veteran status, and sexual orientation.