



2022 Executive Board Election Candidate

Vice President for Communications

Name: Alyson Murray

Title: Associate Director, Recruitment

Institution: Dalhousie University

Location/Region: Canada/Canada & U.S.

Member Group: Post-Secondary (College & University)

Background and Experience

Years of experience in post-secondary admissions counseling or related fields?

8 - 10 years

Please describe any professional or volunteer experience you feel would be relevant for serving on the International ACAC Executive Board.

Engagement with my community and profession through service, volunteerism and leadership development has been a priority throughout my professional path. Professionally, I represent my institution on government-affiliated provincial working groups and have served on a number of committees across my university. For the last three years, I have had increasing leadership involvement with International ACAC. I have been a communications committee member since July 2019, and have led the committee since October 2020. In this capacity, I have supported the interests, skills and engagement of committee members, and supported Board initiatives and operational communication needs. Beyond my direct work as a Board member, I have served a Board representative on the Strategic Planning Steering, the DEI Rollout Working Group and the Hiring Committee. My experience with the International ACAC board builds upon my educational background in communications and my six years of volunteer experience with

the board of the Canadian Public Relations Society (Nova Scotia chapter) where I served a term as President, working with chapters across Canada, as well as with the head office to advance the goals of the profession and align chapter initiatives with national objectives. In my community, I served on the Board of Fusion Halifax, a 2,200+ member association for young professionals in my region, progressing from the director of membership to vice-chair and chair. Through these experiences, I have acquired experience in governance, stakeholder relations including internal and external communication, fundraising and board management within a not for profit, volunteer-run board.

Please describe how you have engaged in the international community, and the impact this has had on your professional life. Describe any International ACAC Committee experience you have.

For the last seven years my work has focused extensively on the engagement and support of international students, student supporters and industry partners. I have on the ground experience working with students, college counsellors and independent counsellors in over 25 countries. I proactively seek opportunities to enhance my intercultural competency, and understanding of issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, in particular those pertaining to supporting international students and student supporters. I have contributed to the international higher education community through conference presentations at two CIS Forums and NACAC's Vancouver International Universities Event, and attendance at six International ACAC and CIS conferences. Within International ACAC I have fostered global connections through volunteerism and engagement in online regional round ups, the annual conference and through my collaboration with my committee members, board colleagues and members at large. During the Webinar Wednesday's series, I coordinated a community of volunteer moderators from around the world, and have I have volunteered alongside colleagues from a variety of membership categories, cultural and geographic backgrounds on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and as a mentor in the mentorship program. I currently lead the Communications Committee which is composed of members living and working from Hawai'i to China, and many countries in between. We work to support the diverse communication needs of our members, acknowledging the linguistic, cultural, technical and geographic barriers our diverse membership faces. Recently, I advocated for the establishment of an official WeChat account to better support our large member base in China.

VP Communications Specific Questions

Please describe your familiarity with social media management, newsletter curation, and website content production and management. List or discuss projects you have led, systems

you have worked with or other relevant experience with communication/marketing strategies.

I have an education background in both public relations and corporate communications, including marketing. I previously worked in a higher education communications role for five years, and now engage in higher level marketing and communications strategy in my current role at Dalhousie University. On the International ACAC Communications Committee I co-supported the development and distribution of the quarterly newsletter for 1.5 years, and have familiarity with a variety of mass marketing platforms including MailChimp. I am comfortable navigating a variety of content management systems, as well as writing for the web, and recognize the importance of exceptional user experience across devices and regions. Measuring the success of communications work is critical and I am comfortable navigating measurement tools including social media analytics, Google Analytics and assessing key metrics including open and click through rates. I am comfortable producing content and managing a variety of social media platforms including Instagram (posts, stories, reels), Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook pages and groups, LinkedIn pages, and increasingly, TikTok and WeChat. I regularly participate in digital marketing campaign planning for my institution, sit on our institution-wide Communications Planning Committee and was selected as a stakeholder for our ongoing Institutional Brand Refresh Advisory group. I am very comfortable navigating media relations, key message development, communications planning and liaising with creative partners and agencies. I have experience with crisis communications, and brand strategy development and implementation.

Please describe ideas you have for the future direction of this position, or specific initiatives you would like to develop. This may include this specific position, or may be in collaboration with another Vice President. Be as detailed as possible.

In the short term, I would like to advance several 'quick win' initiatives: •Support the development of a brand refresh including: brand inventory; brand strategy (positioning, persona, etc.); development of a brand guide and collateral; and the rollout and implementation of a refreshed brand. •Implement an official WeChat account to ensure a consistent and professional communication platform for our significant membership base in China. Once established, revisit existing social media channels to ensure they are still meeting our needs – as required, refresh, retire or add channels. •Engage in a digital architecture review with a primary focus on our website and digital platforms including email communication tools. •Streamline communications and marketing processes between the Committee, HQ, the Board and the Leadership Team as new HQ staff are onboarded. At a higher level, I would like to prioritize amplifying the work of the DEI committee as appropriate, and developing a strong communications plan to roll out the ongoing strategic planning work. All of the initiatives noted above are centered on two key areas: modernization of International ACAC's communication

and member engagement tactics, and increased transparency and inclusiveness in our communications.

Part of this position is managing people, committees, and projects. What is your experience in this area? Describe your management style. How do you like to be managed?

I have experience managing both diverse work and volunteer teams. I currently manage ten people at work, and nine volunteers on the Communications Committee. This year, I led the development and implementation of a designated position on my team, and have increased the number of team members self-identifying as a member of an underrepresented group by 30%. I bring an engaged style of management to my work, and consider my leadership style to be both collaborative and participatory. I like to support and empower others and am comfortable delineating priorities and a path forward for my team. I greatly value relationship building, in particular among remote teams, and aim to infuse fun and lightheartedness into my leadership style. Leading a team of volunteers who are electing to give their time to us is a privilege. Like with my team at work, I want to ensure each member feels supported, engaged and recognized, with opportunities for team members to develop their own skills and leadership abilities. I hold an appreciative mindset and honor unique approaches to the work while upholding high expectations for the outcome. My preferred management style is one where there is open communication and a clear sense of expectations. I enjoy collaborating with others, and taking on projects that stretch me out of my comfort zone.

Name your three most impactful takeaways from the December 2020 DEIJ Organization Assessment Report. How would you advance the conversation around diversity and inclusion within International ACAC? How do you believe the Executive Board should function in this capacity?

1. There are structural matters within the organization that need to be addressed in order for us to most effectively move forward in a way that ensure the full and equitable participation and engagement of all members. Resetting our foundation, and redefining who we are as an organization, and what practices uphold that vision and mission will be critical. Our membership has grown and diversified, but we have not kept pace with the needs of our community. The International ACAC of yesterday will not meet the needs of the organization today. 2. There is a desire, and perhaps a need to decentralize some of the organization's activities to de-centre North America and increase the ability for members globally to engage. There are structural (time zone, technology, communication, channels), programmatic and resource considerations to work through, but our members are not having an equitable experience in their interactions with our association. 3. The organization needs to be explicit and complete in its communication

of practices, decisions and initiatives. There are engaged volunteers across the organization who have a desire to do great work on our behalf, and there is very good work happening in many areas. Removing barriers between members and the Board, 'pulling back the curtain' to allow our full community to engage in ways that are meaningful to them, and to understand the work of the organization is needed. Trust needs to be re-established and maintained.

All Applicant Questions

Please provide a maximum 250 word statement of why you wish to run for the International ACAC Board, and other relevant information you would like members to know about you that you have not previously shared in this application. Your statement will be shared with the general membership if you are slated for a position.

Volunteering with International ACAC has been one of my most impactful professional development and volunteer experiences to date. I have served for half of a term as the Vice President for Communications and during that time I have been challenged in new ways, had and have opportunities to play a part in ensuring the organization is evolving to meet the needs of our members and our industry. There is great momentum within International ACAC, but I can see that there is work still to be done to ensure we are supporting our diverse membership, keeping pace with our changing industry and most importantly continuing to serve students who continue to overcome incredible odds to pursue post-secondary education. It would be a privilege to continue to play a role in advancing this work. The Vice President for Communications role allows me to draw on my academic and professional backgrounds in both communications and higher education, and apply my skills and experience in new and interesting ways to support the Communications Committee and the Board. My involvement in the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and othering working groups has allowed me to further my knowledge and contributions to International ACAC beyond the scope of the Communications Committee. The perspectives that I have gained from this cross-functional work further motivates me to link the enthusiasm, skills and experience within the committee, and across the organization to initiatives that benefit our members and move the association forward.