



Senior Director of External Relations

THE OPPORTUNITY

This is a defining moment for C&S.

As America approaches its 250th anniversary, C&S is working to help spark a new era of civic participation—one where millions of young people are equipped and inspired to strengthen their communities. Our goal is ambitious: activate 20 million young people as civic problem-solvers by 2029.

At C&S, we believe progress happens through connection. Between campuses and communities. Between employers and educators. Between institutions and young people. Our new brand platform, *The Power of C&S*, reflects our belief that meaningful change happens when unlikely partners work together to create solutions and strengthen communities.

C&S has built real momentum—a new brand platform, flagship initiatives, an established field-influence practice, and a growing communications team. Now we are elevating our external relations into a coordinated, senior-led function, and we are looking for the leader to drive it forward.

As Senior Director of External Relations, you will expand C&S's influence by building strategic relationships, advancing thought leadership, elevating stories and evidence, convening leaders, and positioning the organization at the center of conversations about civic participation, civic skills, and the future of young people.

You will direct the organization's media relations, storytelling, speaking, and external engagement efforts while cultivating the relationships and partnerships that extend the reach and impact of our work. You will help determine where and how C&S shows up externally, identify opportunities to shape conversations and build trust, and ensure that our communications and relationships work together to advance organizational goals.

This is a rare opportunity to take a strong foundation and accelerate it—bringing strategic coordination and senior leadership to an organization with real momentum, leading a growing team, and shaping how a national organization contributes to civic renewal in America.

Position Overview

The **Senior Director of External Relations** will play an integral role in overseeing the media relations agency of record and external consultants and reports to the Chief Communications Officer.

ABOUT C&S

C&S works to ensure young people have the skills, opportunities, and support to participate in their communities and help solve problems that matter to them.

We partner with college presidents, educators, employers, community leaders, philanthropists, and young people themselves to build three essential civic skills:

- Having productive conversations across differences
- Using reliable information
- Working with others to solve problems
- Our work spans campuses, communities, and workplaces, helping create more pathways for young people to participate in civic life and strengthen the country one community at a time.

YOUR IMPACT

Lead C&S's external relations strategy

- Develop and execute an integrated external relations strategy that aligns communications, thought leadership, partnerships, speaking engagements, convenings, and field influence efforts across our three portfolios: college campuses, workplaces, and communities.
- Establish clear priorities for where C&S invests its visibility, relationships, and influence.
- Create a disciplined approach to evaluating opportunities based on organizational goals, audience relevance, field influence, and potential impact.
- Ensure all external engagement activities contribute to measurable outcomes tied to organizational priorities and key performance indicators.
- Build systems and dashboards that track influence, engagement, visibility, and relationship outcomes.

Advance thought leadership, storytelling, and media relations

- Lead strategies that increase awareness, credibility, and influence for C&S and its flagship initiatives.
- Oversee media relations efforts in partnership with the agency of record, securing earned media opportunities aligned with organizational priorities.
- Develop and execute thought leadership activities tied to major initiatives, research releases, surveys, and owned moments.
- Identify and elevate compelling stories that demonstrate how young people, campuses, employers, and communities are working together to strengthen civic life. Manage freelance and staff content creators, serving as editor and writer as needed.
- Support senior leaders and ambassadors as visible and trusted public voices through media opportunities, speaking engagements, op-eds, and external communications.
- Ensure communications efforts build trust through visible action, credible proof, and measurable impact.

Build strategic relationships and field partnerships

- Develop and manage a portfolio of high-value relationships with leaders and organizations across higher education, philanthropy, business, civic life, media, consumer brands, and the nonprofit sector that align to our three portfolios: college campuses, workplaces, and communities.
- Cultivate partnerships that advance C&S's strategic priorities, strengthen organizational influence, and create opportunities for collaboration and shared action.
- Convene leaders and organizations around common goals related to civic participation, civic preparedness, and youth engagement.
- Serve as the primary relationship manager for field-level and institutional partnerships, working closely with colleagues across programs, communications, and marketing.
- In partnership with the Senior Director of Marketing, ensure clear coordination between strategic field partnerships and audience-development partnerships.

Influence the field

- Advance adoption of C&S's frameworks, civic skills, research, and measurement approaches across higher education, workforce, philanthropy, and civic sectors.
- Identify opportunities to embed C&S ideas, language, and evidence into conferences, publications, coalitions, and field initiatives.
- Track and strengthen indicators of field influence, including citations, adoption, speaking invitations, strategic collaborations, and partnership requests.
- Help position C&S as the premier nonprofit leader in higher education civic preparation and a leading voice in civic renewal.

Lead external presence, convenings, and ambassador engagement

- Develop and manage C&S's conference, speaking, and convening strategy.
- Determine where the organization shows up externally and how success will be measured.
- Lead engagement around key moments, including research releases, flagship initiatives, and C&S-

- owned convenings and summits.
- Prepare and support senior leaders, ambassadors, and partners to represent C&S effectively in public-facing settings.
- Build opportunities for leaders across sectors to connect, collaborate, and advance shared priorities.

Lead and scale the function

- Directly supervise and develop the Communications Manager.
- Manage the media relations agency of record and other consultants, speechwriters, vendors, and external partners.
- Develop and steward budgets associated with external relations activities.
- Strengthen and scale the systems, processes, and operating rhythms that allow the function to grow.
- Stay current on emerging trends, narratives, platforms, and opportunities that affect C&S's reach and influence.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

In your first year, you will have:

- Built C&S's External Relations function, including a clear strategy, operating model, and measurement framework.
- Increased the visibility and influence of C&S through strategic media placements, thought leadership opportunities, speaking engagements, and field participation.
- Established a portfolio of high-value relationships and partnerships that advance organizational priorities and create opportunities for collaboration.
- Developed a focused external engagement strategy that ensures C&S shows up in the right places, with the right audiences, at the right moments.
- Expanded adoption of C&S's ideas, language, research, and civic skills frameworks across key sectors.
- Positioned senior leaders and ambassadors as credible and sought-after voices in conversations about civic participation, civic skills, and the future of young people.

WHAT YOU'LL BRING

Required

- 8–12+ years of experience in external relations, strategic communications, public affairs, partnerships, coalition-building, or related fields.
- Demonstrated success developing and executing communications, thought leadership, media relations, or public engagement strategies.
- Experience building and managing senior-level relationships across sectors.
- Strong understanding of how communications, storytelling, partnerships, and convenings work together to build influence and drive organizational goals.
- Excellent written, verbal, relationship management, and project management skills.
- Experience managing agencies, consultants, vendors, or external partners.
- Experience supervising and developing staff.
- Willingness and ability to travel approximately 25%.
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional experience.

Preferred

- Experience in higher education, civic engagement, democracy, philanthropy, workforce development, or youth-serving organizations.
- Existing relationships with leaders and organizations working across higher education, civic renewal, philanthropy, media, or public affairs.
- Experience supporting executives and senior leaders as public-facing spokespeople.
- Familiarity with research-driven communications, field-building strategies, and coalition-based initiatives.

HOW YOU WORK

- You are a builder who enjoys creating new functions, systems, and opportunities.
- You build trust and consensus across stakeholders regardless of position or authority.
- You are energized by connecting people and organizations that do not typically work together.
- You understand how ideas spread through relationships, stories, media, partnerships, and shared experiences.
- You focus on outcomes and impact rather than activity alone.
- You are comfortable operating in ambiguity and turning strategy into action.
- You believe young people should have meaningful opportunities to participate in their communities and help shape the future.

OUR CORE VALUES

- **We are constantly learning and improving.** We test and refine new ideas and learn from our mistakes. We dare to question old solutions. We seek opportunities to collaborate with our diverse team; different backgrounds, skill sets, and thinking styles give us valuable new perspectives. We share knowledge and insights with each other to help us grow as individuals and as an organization.
- **We value diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all.** We believe that we are stronger for our differences, and we acknowledge, respect, and appreciate them. We actively work with and learn from everyone—across all demographics, backgrounds, ideologies, and geographies. We identify areas where we differ and, for the good of the organization and each other, we explore and engage with differing perspectives.
- **We are gracious and grateful in all that we do.** We invest in our relationships with warmth and a sense of humor. We express gratitude to all our colleagues and stakeholders. While we strive for excellence, we recognize that no one is perfect. We give others the benefit of the doubt and act with kindness and integrity.
- **We are attentive and intentional.** We are aware of the needs of the world and those around us so that our work has a real impact. Our work is mission-driven and we know the “whys”—both large and small—behind what we do. Recognizing that details matter, we are equally committed to quality.

To Apply

Simply visit [Idealist](https://ideali.st/sZcheC) (<https://ideali.st/sZcheC>) to apply.

Compensation for this position includes an annual salary range between \$135k-\$145k commensurate with experience, as well as a generous benefits package.

Citizens & Scholars will consider all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. This position may require pre-employment screening potentially including a criminal background check, verification of academic credentials, licenses, certifications, and/or verification of work history.