

# the MCKNIGHT CENTER

FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Director of External Affairs

### Job Description

*Reports to: Executive Director*

*Status: Full-Time, Exempt*

*Supervises: Marketing Team, Communications Team, Development Team (specific positions yet to be defined)*

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#### **MCKNIGHT CENTER MISSION:**

To enrich and transform the lives of the students at Oklahoma State University and serve as a beacon for music and performing arts of the highest caliber for the State of Oklahoma, the region and the nation.

#### **DEPARTMENT PURPOSE:**

*The External Affairs Department exists to effectively and efficiently develop meaningful and lasting relationships with the patrons we serve through high-quality customer-service, delivering products and experiences that connect, inspire and impassion patrons for the Arts.*

#### **PRIMARY PURPOSE:**

The Director of External Affairs leads the department in the wholistic “one customer” concept of managing multiple relationship touchpoints with McKnight Center patrons.

#### **KEY AREAS OF FOCUS**

##### **Serve as Organizational and Department Leader**

- Contribute and lead as a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT);
- Develop and achieve revenue targets and department budgets in cooperation with Executive Director and Director of Finance;
- Represent the organization to the communities we serve;
- Attend, coordinate and contribute to Board Meetings and Committee Meetings as assigned;

##### **Align and Bridge Development and Marketing Efforts of McKnight Center**

- Responsible for all functions of Development, Marketing, Public Relations and Communications;

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- Coordinate all functions of the External Affairs Department to provide top quality customer service to all patrons of the McKnight Center (donors, subscribers, single ticket buyers, volunteers and general public);
- Coordinate and maximize all organizational communication efforts to achieve institutional objectives;
- Ensure wholistic approach to patron engagement;
- Lead, develop and employ strategies and tactics that unify department efforts to achieve organizational objectives, fostering a team culture that brings together staff from across the department;

## **Lead Organizational Marketing and Communication Efforts**

- Supervise staff, set strategies and revenue projection goals for all marketing campaigns and annual ticket sales campaigns in order to achieve strategic objectives of the organization;
- Develop, protect and propagate the institutional brand;
- Coordinate the use of the website and other social and mass media tools for organizational messaging;
- Oversee all processes related to the box office and ticket delivery systems and overall customer service;

## **Lead Development and Organizational Advancement Efforts**

- Supervise staff, set strategies and goals for all campaigns in coordination with appropriate and related staff. Campaigns to include but not limited to the annual operating, endowment, capital and planned giving.
- Oversee grant research and application processes to identify funding sources aligned with institutional purpose;
- Ensure the development of corporate support and sponsorships;
- Oversee planning, production and goal setting of all special event activities including major fundraising events;

Other duties as assigned.

## **JOB COMPETENCIES AND EXPERIENCE:**

### **Education & Certifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Marketing, Music Business, Communications or another related field required.
- Preference may be given to candidates with advanced degrees.

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- CFRE preferred, but not required.
- Knowledge of classical music, performing and visual arts will be a contributing factor to success.

## Experience:

- The ideal candidate will have at least ten years (combined) of senior-level leadership experience both in Marketing and Development disciplines.
- Preference given to candidates with executive leadership experience in the cultural arts.
- Expertise with fundraising and ticket delivery software, such as Archtics or Tessitura, required.
- Proven track record for successful team building and development of effective institutional culture.
- Proven sense of humor and ability to have fun.

## Organizational Competencies:

- **Effective Communication:** Able to present effectively to large groups of individuals; is clear, articulate and direct in sharing and providing feedback; develops communication plans to ensure effective transparency and involvement throughout the organization; able to present complex issues appropriately for a target audience; maintains communication with all staff and stakeholders
  - **Execution & Initiative:** Drives a high performance culture, having the ability to differentiate performance and demonstrate managerial courage; maintains focus on organizational priorities and sets challenging performance goals for units; invest personal energy and time in building buy-in among key influencers in advance of critical decisions; seeks to ensure that strategic initiatives are effectively executed and communicated to relevant audiences within the organization; encourages an environment in which results surpass activity and teamwork surpasses results; able to remain focused on only mission-related initiatives
  - **Teamwork/Interpersonal Skills:** Builds cohesive teams of people across organization based on strong personal trust and relationships; motivates the organization to increase employee engagement levels; constantly assesses and builds team morale; seeks out relationships with experts as a means of obtaining information about best practices and skills vital to departmental and organizational success; maximizes personal networks in different parts of the organization, campus & community partners, and effectively uses contacts to achieve organizational goals
  - **Problem Solving/Judgment:** Oversees the development of guidelines, principles and approaches; appropriately applies risk management practices, including the escalation of risk issues, and recognizes and undertakes opportunities for others to learn from inevitable mistakes, and incorporates experience in future decisions; able to anticipate problems/ challenges and required strategy for a situation; makes connections among previously unrelated ideas and looks beyond the first right answer
  - **Adaptability/Flexibility:** Plays an active role in implementing change; encourages others to challenge the status quo; able to quickly adapt and lead during changing circumstances; foresees potential breakdown in the establishment/development of change and proactively recommends modifications to maintain standards of deliverables; anticipates specific reasons underlying resistance to change and proactively implements approaches to address potential concerns; remains active, visible and engaged throughout all stages of change management
  - **Courage & Conviction:** Takes responsibility for departmental outcomes regardless of success and learns from all results; creates a departmental environment where failure is an opportunity for learning

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- **Patron Centered:** Uses patron and university feedback to improve service and feed into the business planning; builds performance based business relationships by identifying and meeting patron needs rather than simply relying on social or affiliated relationships

## PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Must use a computer terminal and view a computer screen for extended periods of time. Must talk in person or by phone (frequently and sometimes for extended periods) to people on campus and across the country. Must constantly use visual acuity to check printed and designed materials of various types. Must be able to navigate within the McKnight Center. Typical office working conditions.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The McKnight Center is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.

## MCKNIGHT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

[mcknightcenter.org](http://mcknightcenter.org)

The McKnight Center for the Performing Arts, currently under construction on the campus of Oklahoma State University, is scheduled to open to the public in October 2019 with three separate performances of the New York Philharmonic. Under the baton of Music Director Jaap van Zweden, the New York Philharmonic's week-long performance and teaching residency sets the stage for The McKnight Center to attract world-class performances and be a catalyst for culture and growth for Oklahoma State University and Stillwater. Construction of the \$70 million McKnight Center began in September of 2016. It will serve as a beacon of music and performing arts of the highest caliber reaching state, regional and national audiences with its innovative programming, festivals and artist residencies.

The 93,000-square foot McKnight Center for the Performing Arts will feature state-of-the-art technology. A concert theater with 1,143 seats and a 207-seat recital hall will serve as the primary performance spaces, both designed with optimum listening environments including variable acoustic systems and the latest in high-definition projection capabilities. A scenic outdoor plaza, designed to accommodate up to 2,000 people, will be equipped with an oversized LED wall to simulcast McKnight Center performances to the plaza as well as broadcast a wide variety of content from across the globe.

An ambitious fundraising campaign is underway to provide an endowment to generate annual programming funds. With the program endowment in place, the McKnight Center will present celebrated national and international productions and artists that will enhance the cultural experience on campus and across the region. A diverse programming mix of world-class performers will be curated and presented annually, including artists in classical, pop, jazz and world music. Touring productions of dance, theater and Broadway will be presented regularly.

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The McKnight Center, incorporated as a stand-alone 501c3 organization, is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees. The facility, owned by Oklahoma State University, will be operated separately by this independent non-profit corporation.

## **MARK A. BLAKEMAN, MARILYNN AND CARL THOMA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mark A. Blakeman was named the Marilyn and Carl Thoma Executive Director of the McKnight Center for the Performing Arts in February of 2017. Following an extensive national search, Blakeman was selected to serve as the first Executive Director and to establish the non-profit organization that will oversee the operation of the \$70 million performing arts center at Oklahoma State University.

From 2014 until the time of his departure, Blakeman served as President and CEO of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra (TSO). During his tenure, he expanded the TSO's community partnerships and broadened its appeal through the creation of a new Family Series. He established the first two endowed orchestra chairs in the TSO's 87-year history, led the search committee in the hiring of Jose Luis Gomez as new Music Director, launched the Partner with a Players program and led the organization through a galvanizing strategic planning process, resulting in an ambitious five-year strategic initiative.

Prior to Tucson, Blakeman spent more than fifteen years with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra (NSO). During his Nashville tenure, Blakeman served in many leadership roles most recently as Chief Operating Officer. He was intricately involved in the design, construction and running of the acclaimed Schermerhorn Symphony Center, owned and operated by the NSO. Blakeman's extensive experience in electronic media work includes overseeing more than 25 commercial recording projects, which garnered eight GRAMMY Awards®, and over ten national telecasts resulting in two regional Emmy nominations and one Emmy Award.

Blakeman holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Business from Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and a Master of Business Administration in Arts Administration from Oklahoma City University. In 2008, he was recognized as a distinguished alumnus of MTSU's College of Mass Communications.

## **ABOUT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

One of the nation's top research universities, Oklahoma State University has an enrollment of approximately 36,000, 25,000 of whom attend the main Stillwater campus. OSU was founded in 1890 and is a comprehensive liberal arts and land-grant institution. It has programs in the arts and sciences, engineering, business, education, human sciences and agriculture, with several programs rated in the top ten in the United States. It grants associates, undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees. It has campuses in Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Okmulgee, including the OSU Institute of Technology and OSU Center for Health Sciences.

Under the leadership of President Burns Hargis, OSU has experienced unprecedented growth and improvement over the last decade. Including the construction of the McKnight Center, OSU has embarked on more than \$1B in capital projects under President Hargis' visionary stewardship.

## **ABOUT STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA**

Stillwater, Oklahoma is a micropolitan area of 77,000 people (45,688 city) located in north central Oklahoma, near the geographic center of the U.S. Often called Oklahoma's "premier education community," Stillwater is the home of some of the region's finest education and training institutions, including Oklahoma State University, Meridian Technology Center, Northern Oklahoma College/OSU Gateway, and one of the nation's top rated public school systems.

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We're proud of our reputation as a university city, but Stillwater is also home to a diverse mix of business and industry, from manufacturing to advanced technology. With its low crime rate and a cost of living below the national average, Stillwater is consistently ranked among the nation's top small cities for quality of life.

The Stillwater Medical Center is an award-winning hospital that provides ready access to high quality, full service healthcare. Stillwater is nearly equidistant from Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and has a regional airport with non-stop commercial flights to Dallas/Fort Worth.

Stillwater has been voted "Oklahoma's Friendliest Town" by readers of *Oklahoma Living Magazine* and named the #6 "Best Small City in America!" from Demographics Daily Online. The beautiful Georgian architecture of Oklahoma State University is surrounded by historic attractions, unique restaurants and an abundance of entertainment and activities.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The McKnight Center is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.

## **SALARY AND BENEFITS**

The McKnight Center for the Performing Arts offers a competitive benefits and compensation package.

## **TO APPLY OR NOMINATE**

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter, resume and list three professional references. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply or nominate a candidate, please submit your inquiry to: [HR@mcknightcenter.org](mailto:HR@mcknightcenter.org)