The Vice President for University Relations is the University officer responsible for the development, maintenance and administration of programs that foster a greater understanding of the institution, and which incorporate the University's major strategic communications activities. These programs involve on- and off-campus constituencies important to the welfare of the University and which are closely aligned with institutional interests. Principal elements of activity include a broad array of strategic communications, media relations through the office of News and Information, the Visitors Information Center, the University Speakers Bureau, and Commencement Exercises.

Diversity is a central value and central focus of the work of University Relations.

1. First, and most importantly, in all the ways that University Relations generates and extends communications to all of our constituencies, external and internal, it is our responsibility to express the realities of the University of Washington as a community that values its diversity. For example, in the University’s annual report (wherein University Relations provides the non-financial content) we make a conscious effort to reflect the diversity of the University. We have participated in the successful recruitment of commencement speakers which in recent years include Sherman Alexie, a native American author, Bill Gray, President of the United Negro College Fund, and Julian Bond, President of NAACP. We make sure to represent the range of diversity among students and faculty in our advertising activities. Our “Student Voices” radio advertising program, for example, has included a spot aired in the Yakima Valley in which a UW student speaks in Spanish about his experiences.

2. Within our strategic communications program, we have an explicit objective of contributing to the reputation of the University of Washington as an institution that is diverse, values that diversity, and welcomes people from all backgrounds. We regularly track public perceptions with a statewide survey of 600 adults. One of the standard items is “The UW is a welcoming place for students from all social backgrounds.” In the most recent wave of this survey, 94.9% of respondents agreed with that statement (and over 60% “agreed strongly”). Further analysis of this item showed no differences in level of agreement among people of various ethnic backgrounds (the sample was selected to overweight minority respondents and then re-balanced in the statistical analysis). A second item of relevance is “How strongly would you recommend the University of Washington to a son, daughter, or other relative as a place to attend college?” In the most recent data, 86.3% said they would recommend the UW compared to 6.1% who would recommend not attending the UW. Again, analysis of responses in terms of ethnic background found no statistically significant differences.
3. University Relations staff are involved in a variety of community relations activities that provide the opportunity to generate visibility for the University’s interests and commitments to diversity and to participate in building a larger community that positively values diversity. These activities include (but are not limited to) a leadership role in the Urban Enterprise Center, including its Forum on Race program, board membership in ACAP (Accounting Career Awareness Program, that brings about 70 minority high school students for a week-long residency program on the UW campus), participation in activities of the Urban League, Concilio for the Spanish Speaking, and other such organizations. For the past three years, University Relations has coordinated the Martin Luther King Day of Service, mobilizing nearly 1000 student, faculty and staff volunteers for service projects across our community.

4. Within University Relations, we’ve recruited and continue to strive for a diversified professional team based upon demonstrated ability and aptitude, regardless of gender, color, nationality, physical disabilities, sexual orientation or religion. As a result, we have a strong, effective group, with diversity in all of the above categories. We openly respect the variety of human life experience and the richness such perspectives bring to our team.

5. The Vice President for University Relations, as a member of the leadership team of the University, is an active participant in formulating and pursuing institutional strategy regarding diversity and related subjects. The Office of University Relations was the primary author of the original Diversity Compact and was responsible for developing the first progress report. More recently, University Relations framed the President’s comments regarding the inflammatory bake sale activity. University Relations is working in close partnership with the Office of Minority Affairs on an array of communications related to diversity. University Relations participates in the steering committee of the Diversity Appraisal Project and will be an active partner with OMA in formulating communications strategies in support of that project.