Created in 2013 by University of Chicago alumnus David Axelrod (AB’76), the mission of the Institute of Politics (IOP) is to ignite in University of Chicago students a passion for politics, public service and civic engagement and to provide a forum for the debate and discussion of public issues. By bringing practitioners from the public arena to campus, and providing extracurricular opportunities in politics, policy, government, nonprofits and journalism, the non-partisan Institute seeks to open pathways for engagement and leadership to students across campus.

There are four primary programmatic components of the Institute:

- The Speaker Series hosts nationally and internationally recognized speakers on a wide variety of issues related to the mission of the IOP, with more than 1,400 speakers coming to campus from across the political spectrum, a testament to the IOP’s non-partisan commitment to elevating public conversation around important contemporary issues.
- The Pritzker Fellows Program presents an opportunity for political practitioners, policy makers, journalists, and others engaged in politics to be in residence at the University of Chicago for an academic quarter.
- The IOP’s Career Development program sponsors 300 annual robust, paid internships for undergraduate and graduate students, placing them in high-level settings overseas, in Washington, D.C. and at the state and local levels.
- The IOP’s Civic Engagement programs help students deepen their understanding of civic literacy, learn the concepts and skills to become democratically engaged, and develop the commitment and efficacy to become lifelong leaders; it does so by offering leadership development programs, experiential opportunities such as workshops and treks, and supporting student-led initiatives.

The Director, Speakers Series is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and quarterly planning of enriching and engaging content for the Institute of Politics’ robust Speakers Series. This series sponsors 100+ public programs each year, bringing to campus over 200 leaders from the political, policy, foreign affairs, journalism, activism, and nonprofit sectors. The Director of Speaker Series serves as the primary leader of the Institute’s efforts to devise creative, topical and substantive programming that connects students and the broader public to the most important issues and leaders of our time. The ideal candidate will have a broad knowledge of current affairs and politics, strong editorial sensibilities, and experience inspiring others to creative excellence. They will be intellectually curious, will have original takes on topics and framing for IOP events, and will have a solid network of senior contacts in the political, public service, and journalism fields.

This position works closely and collaboratively with the Institute Director and Executive Director to establish overall goals for the Speaker Series and on the development of all specific events. They are the lead creator of the Institute’s political and policy-oriented public programs, including topic selection, framing and content development, and identifying and securing speakers. They will also help conceive of special events and projects the IOP might undertake outside of regular Speaker Series programming, such as conferences, forums, partnerships or other events that allow the IOP to fill important voids and advance its mission in original ways. (The IOP’s 2020 Campaign Journalism Conference is a recent example).
The Director, Speaker Series also works closely with the Institute’s Director of Production and Special Events, who leads on the logistics planning and execution of all events in the Speaker Series and other public IOP events. This role is supported by the Associate Producer of the Speaker Series, who also supports the Director of Production and Special Events; additionally, a team of student interns and volunteers support the Speaker Series program. The position reports to the IOP’s Executive Director. Note that while we are currently operating in a remote work environment, this description reflects the roles and responsibilities of an in-person work environment. We anticipate returning to an in-person environment at some point in the summer of 2021.

Unit-Specific Responsibilities

- Lead the strategy and design of the Institute’s ongoing political and policy-oriented Speakers Series program of public events, including topic selection, framing and content development, and identifying and securing speakers.
- Drive the internal generation of specific program ideas and event content, working collaboratively with staff and students to maximize creativity, diversity, relevance and impact.
- Develop a calendar of programs that includes some events planned well in advance around anticipated hooks or topics, and some quick turnaround events that are topical and responsive to the news of the moment. Ensure a mix of high-profile newsmaker voices and lower profile but still compelling, issue-focused voices.
- Lead on the identification and booking of IOP Speakers Series guests, including drafting letters of invitation and creating event briefings as necessary.
- Work closely with the Institute’s Director of Production and Special Events, who leads on the logistics planning and execution of all events in the Speaker Series and other public IOP events, to ensure smooth event execution.
- Work closely with Director of Communications to develop promotional materials and outreach strategies to cultivate audiences.
- Work closely with the IOP’s Student Advisory Board to ensure student input in development and production of the Speakers Series, including the vetting of ideas from students and other University constituencies.
- Support select productions for The Axe Files podcast, co-produced by the IOP and CNN.
- Serves as a key resource for program information. Resolves problems or questions referred by program staff, University administrators, or other contingencies.
- Develop and steward content relationships with internal and external partners, including student organizations, University departments and centers, and off-campus entities.
- May train, oversee and monitor the work of the Associate Producer, Speaker Series; advise and manage the Speaker Series Content intern.
- Help develop special projects, partnerships, and events outside of Speaker Series programming that leverage the IOP’s unique assets and enable it to contribute in new ways to public discourse and engage students.
- Serves as key resource for Speaker Series information. Answers questions and solves problems referred by staff, University administrators, or other groups.
- Be onsite during most events—including typically 2 to 4 evenings a week during peak programming months (about six months/year), and, very occasionally, during some weekend hours.
- Approximately two business related trips are required each year.
- Performs other related work as needed.
Preferred Qualifications

Education:
Bachelor’s Degree required, advanced degree preferred.

Experience:
- Minimum requirements include knowledge and skills developed through 7+ years of work experience in a related job discipline.
- Ideal candidate will have between 8-10 years of experience in journalism, politics, policy, or public affairs, focused on researching, developing and executing substantive political and policy-oriented content for broad audiences.
- Deep knowledge of, experience in, and enthusiasm for politics and current events, including the ability to identify timely and relevant topics and speakers.
- Experience working directly with highly accomplished VIP participants, including elected officials, media, diplomats and other prominent public figures.

Preferred Competencies

- The ideal candidate will have a broad knowledge of current affairs and politics, strong editorial sensibilities, and experience inspiring others to creative excellence.
- Passion for the IOP’s mission of working with young people to inspire the next generation of political and public service leaders.
- Intellectual curiosity, fresh thinking, and excellent instincts for where national, international, and local political and policy conversations are going next. Have original takes on topics and framing for IOP events.
- Bring a solid network of senior contacts in the political, public service, and journalism fields.
- Excellent written / verbal communication skills and ability to sell ideas to others.
- Deep knowledge of current affairs and politics, strong editorial sensibilities, and experience inspiring others to creative excellence.
- Proven track record of developing and managing multiple, complex events or stories and producing work under demanding timelines.
- Willingness to approach contentious issues from all possible sides, with an eye towards fairness and accuracy.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work effectively and professionally in a creative, fast-paced, intellectual team environment, as well as to work well with influential guests, key University audiences (students, faculty, and administrators) and other external stakeholders.
- Self-starting, high energy, results-oriented, and able to handle simultaneous high-profile projects with minimum supervision.
- Experience managing staff and building cohesive teams.
- Strong commitment to diversity.

Application Documents

- Resume (required)
- Cover Letter (required)
• Reference Contact Information (optional)

• **Note:** When applying, all required documents MUST be uploaded under the Resume/CV section of the application.

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Staff Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should call 773-702-5800 or submit a request via [Applicant Inquiry Form](https://www.uchicago.edu).

The University of Chicago’s Annual Security & Fire Safety Report (Report) provides information about University offices and programs that provide safety support, crime and fire statistics, emergency response and communications plans, and other policies and information. The Report can be accessed online at: [http://securityreport.uchicago.edu](http://securityreport.uchicago.edu). Paper copies of the Report are available, upon request, from the University of Chicago Police Department, 850 E. 61st Street, Chicago, IL 60637.