

# EXECUTIVE REPORT

Matthew Tenenbaum  
VP Communications  
September 2012 • AGM



## I. DESCRIPTION OF POSITION:

From the CFMS bylaws:

*The Vice President of Communications shall appropriately publicize the activities of the Federation and facilitate communications within the Federation.*

The VP Communications is responsible for coordinating communications within the CFMS, as well as developing and expressing CFMS messaging to external bodies and stakeholders. This is a fairly broad mandate, and it manifests in multiple ways that can be organized into two categories.

First, the VP Communications is responsible for Internal Communications, and serves as the primary contact point for Canadian medical students. CFMS members are kept in the loop through our biweekly *Rep Communiqués*, as well as through updates to our website and social media. The VP Comm also serves as co-editor of our publication, the *Annual Review*, which is distributed to students at each of our member schools. Further, the role includes a number of administrative tasks, such as maintaining contact lists and recording meeting minutes.

Second, the VP Communications is responsible for External Communications. All media contact is directed through the VP Comm, and daily media monitoring constitutes a significant portion of the role. Press releases are drafted by the VP Comm, following consultation with the Executive and other relevant groups. Additionally, the VP Comm is responsible for nurturing relationships with sister organizations (such as the CMA and CAIR) and other relevant external bodies.

Much of the VP Communications' tasks are carried out in conjunction with other members of the Executive (e.g. the VP Advocacy and Lobby Day), CFMS Officers (e.g. our IT Officers), and our committees (e.g. the Social Media Committee). As well, the VP Comm works closely with the CFMS General Manager to keep the organization running smoothly.

## II. ACTIVITIES

### **Meetings Attended**

Sept 23-25	Annual General Meeting 2011	Calgary, AB
Oct 15-16	Fall Executive Meeting	Ottawa, ON
Oct 30	Social Media Committee Meeting	T/C

Nov 7	Political Advocacy Committee Meeting	T/C
Nov 13	Executive Meeting	T/C
Nov 26-27	CAIR Board of Directors Meeting	Ottawa, ON
Dec 5	Political Advocacy Committee Meeting	T/C
Jan 21-22	Winter Executive Meeting	Toronto, ON
Jan 30	Political Advocacy Committee Meeting	T/C
Feb 6	CFMS Lobby Day	Ottawa, ON
Feb 11-12	CAIR Board of Directors Meeting	Ottawa, ON
Mar 13	Executive Meeting	T/C
Apr 5	Social Media Committee Meeting	T/C
Apr 13-15	Spring General Meeting 2012	Banff, AB
Jun 16-17	CAIR Annual General Meeting 2012	Saskatoon, SK
Aug 25-26	Executive Meeting	Montréal, QC

## Portfolio Updates

### CFMS Website

This has been a transformative year (literally) for the CFMS website. Thanks to the hard work of Nima Kashani and Joanna Li, our Sr. and Jr. IT Officers, I am pleased to report a significant amount of progress in this area.

Last September, we launched a brand new CFMS website that runs off of Joomla, an open-source content management platform. Importantly, this meant that we could update the website ourselves, quickly and easily, without needing to pay an external consultant. However, during the transition process, it became apparent that the new website would not be suitable. The website's custom design, though appealing, restricted the sort of additions or changes we could make without consulting – and paying – our design firm Mindbees. After a great deal of discussion, the decision was made to re-launch the website again in November.

The current website has allowed us to place the most relevant, important content front and centre. News items and updates are now easily visible on the front page, with the most important items displayed in a large, rotating banner. A new Members-Only area has made it quicker and easier to access member benefits and discounts. The *CaRMS Interview Database* – one of our signature features – re-launched in January and was followed shortly by a revamped *Electives Database*. All content from the old website has been migrated over, and it is joined by a significant amount of new material for students.

One new feature of the CFMS website is the *Medical Student Spotlight*, which tells the stories behind some great student initiatives at our member schools. Students can learn from each other, connect to share ideas, and implement similar programming in their own regions. There are many fantastic student projects that exist independent of the CFMS, and we want to make sure that students hear about them. *Medical Student Spotlight* has had a modest beginning consisting of a few entries, but it continues to grow.

Additionally, we've launched a new *Accommodations Database* for students travelling on visiting electives, or for CaRMS interviews. This is a brand new feature, without an equivalent on the previous website, and we hope that it will take much of the hassle and stress out of arranging housing.

Since many Med Socs host their own websites, we have developed a means for them to connect with us. *CFMS Connect* is a miniature version of our website that Med Socs can easily nest within their own, making our content even more accessible. Content is automatically updated and synchronized on our end, presenting a seamless user experience.

There are many other additions – big and small – strewn across our new website. If you haven't already, check out the new [www.cfms.org](http://www.cfms.org) and see for yourself! Our website is also accessible on mobile phones and iPads, so there's no excuse not to visit and register!

Finally, I'd like to welcome Zachery Hynes – our new IT Officer Jr. – to the team. Joanna Li, who previously held that position, has been promoted to IT Officer Sr.. I look forward to seeing the two of them continue to make our website experience a strong one!

### CFMS Annual Review

The *Annual Review* is another large project within the VP Communications portfolio. This annual publication features updates, opinion pieces, and creative works from medical students across the country. It is distributed to our members, to the Deans of Canadian medical schools, and to all the major medical organizations throughout Canada.

The 2012 *Annual Review* was printed and delivered to all of our member schools last spring. It is also available online at [www.cfms.org](http://www.cfms.org). We have put together a 68-page magazine with contributions from across Canada, and we were lucky enough to have Dr. Samantha Nutt, Founder of *War Child Canada*, for our featured interview. Enough credit cannot be given to our Annual Review Editor, Wilson Kwong, our General Manager Rosemary, and the editorial staff at the Canadian Medical Association.

### CFMS Communiqués

The *CFMS Rep Communiqués* have been a key component of our communications strategy. Each *Communiqué* consists of short (usually 200-word) updates that fill students in on what's happening at the CFMS. They have been sent every second Tuesday to all CFMS Reps (VP Externals), who are responsible for distribution at their respective schools. Presidents, Executive members, and other student leaders also receive copies, and they are posted (for members only) on the CFMS website.

In response to feedback that we received at SGM 2012, there have been some significant changes to the way that Communiqués are produced and delivered. Rather than producing them as simple Word or PDF documents, we now use the online service MailChimp to power our Communiqués. This gives us much more control over the feel of the Communiqué, and allows us to incorporate dynamic content such as video.

The biggest change to our Communiqués, in terms of delivery, is that any Canadian medical student can now sign up independently and have the Communiqué delivered directly to them. Students can also specify what types of updates they'd like to receive (general/services/global health) and provide additional demographic information (school/class year) that allows us to provide more targeted updates. Further, MailChimp allows us to track how effective we are at reaching medical students, which can feed back and allow us to produce better, more relevant Communiqués down the road.

### Member Relations

One of the most important roles that the VP Communications fills is acting as a point of contact for all medical students. I typically receive 5-10 emails per day from students looking to get involved, locate resources, or have their questions answered. Though this may be viewed as a series of “small tasks,” it adds up and ensures that our members are kept happy.

Additionally, over the summer I've put together some updated welcome materials for our new students, to help orient them to the CFMS and explain how they can get the most out of their membership. These, and other resources for our reps, can be found on the new *Rep Resources* page in the Members-Only section. As this page is developed down the road, I hope that current and future reps find it useful.

### Social Media

With the establishment of the Social Media Committee last year, we have successfully maintained a presence on Facebook and Twitter! These serve as new ways to engage members who might not otherwise seek us out. In addition to posting news items and updates, we try to engage students in discussion and establish bidirectional communication. As Facebook and Twitter have gone through renovations, we have tried to keep pace and stay as relevant as possible.

In the era of CaRMS and Facebook, the Social Media Committee has also been discussing how best to handle online professionalism. Earlier this year, we worked with the CMA to aid their development of social media guidelines for practicing physicians. We have had some discussions around developing our own student-specific policy to tackle some aspects that are more unique to us, and this is something that was not completed but can be passed forward to next year's team.

We currently have 671 Facebook “likes” and 840 Twitter followers, and we continue to grow! However, of the 7,800+ CFMS members, this still represents a small proportion

and we'd like to see even more student engagement. If you haven't already, check us out at [www.facebook.com/CFMSFEMC](http://www.facebook.com/CFMSFEMC) and [www.twitter.com/CFMSFEMC](http://www.twitter.com/CFMSFEMC) to see the latest developments, and be sure to share these resources with your peers!

## Media Relations

The VP Communications is responsible for coordinating all contact with the media, and for finalizing all press releases prior to distribution. The CMA has been an incredible help throughout this process. Though the fall was relatively quiet, the winter was a very busy time. A total of five press releases were issued over the course of the year.

- *Medical Students Stand Opposed to PEI's Mandatory Return-of-Service Agreements* (Jan. 24 2012) → This was released following PEI's announcement that they would mandate return-of-service from Islanders studying at MUN.
- *Future Physicians call upon Government of Canada to remove barriers to rural practice* (Feb. 6 2012) → This was released to announce our Lobby Day.
- *Budget 2012 must include strategies to improve access to health care: CFMS* (Mar. 19, 2012) → This was released in the lead-up to the federal budget announcement, reiterating our Lobby Day ask.
- *Medical Students support Drummond's proposals for improving medical education* (Mar. 20, 2012) → This was released in response to Ontario's *Drummond Report*, which had recommendations to improve medical education.
- Clarification regarding medical student retention at McGill University (Sept. 4, 2012) → This was released in response to claim's made by the *Coalition Avenir Québec* regarding medical student retention in the province.

In January, the PEI government announced that it would require Island medical students studying at Memorial University to sign a mandatory, three-year return-of-service agreement. This caused significant concern amongst MUN students, and we worked in close collaboration to develop a statement that opposes this measure. There was significant media interest in this story, and it was picked up by CBC Online, the National Post, and others. Atlantic Regional Rep Will Stymiest and MUN PAC Rep Lindsay Ward each gave live interviews, and explained why return-of-service agreements are ultimately ineffective.

I also had the pleasure of coordinating media coverage of this year's Lobby Day. Our ask this year focused on how the federal government can enhance access to health care in rural and remote regions of Canada. We had many requests for radio interviews, including a number from local stations in regions where this issue is most acutely understood. While President Noura Hassan and VP Advocacy Chloe Ward were our primary media contacts, many of our local PAC members stepped up and explained our proposals to the media. During our visit to Parliament Hill, we were also very pleased to have the support of MP Bruce Hyer, who supported us through his own press release and through a motion in the House of Commons.

During the recent Québec election, *Coalition Avenir Québec* leader François Legault made a claim that half of all McGill medical students leave the province after they graduate, and that there should be financial penalties to limit their mobility as physicians. Working with the McGill Medical Students' Society, we put together a press release that corrected this misconception and reiterated our concern about adequate physician supply. It was interesting to observe, for the second time in a year, medical student retention becoming an issue in a provincial election campaign.

Throughout the year, I have continued to monitor health care and medical education issues in the media, so that the CFMS can respond accordingly. We have been very fortunate this year to have a number of affable, engaged media contacts who have been willing to correspond with us.

### Relationship with CAIR

Like my predecessor Robin, I am pleased to serve as the CFMS's external representative to the Canadian Association of Internes and Residents (CAIR). Many of the issues that they face, such as resident duty hours, have parallels within our own work. It was great to gain their insight, participate in their discussions, and collaborate on projects where possible. I think there is much to be gained by nurturing this relationship, and I think that the VP Communications is uniquely positioned to serve as the link between the CFMS and CAIR. As medical students become CAIR members once they start residency, investing in their organization ultimately serves our members.

### **III. FOLLOW-UP, VISION, GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS POSITION**

The year is far from over, and I and others continue to work hard in each of the aforementioned areas. Some next steps are as follows

#### CFMS Website

- One of the questions that we constantly ask ourselves is, "How can we make the website even more useful?" We're continuing to develop the Members-Only area, and looking for ways to make it a "one-stop shop" for busy medical students. We have the potential to customize it based on a student's medical school, level of training, and more. We would love to hear more ideas as we move forward on this!
- Traditionally, the responsibility for updating the website has fallen entirely on the VP Communications and IT Officers. The Executive established a task matrix that has helped to spread this responsibility around, and lessen the burden for the VP Comm. This has been helpful, and I would encourage next year's Executive members and officers to take ownership over individual sections of the website (relevant to their portfolios) and continue to develop them.
- VP Global Health Paxton Bach and National Officer of Partnerships Neil de Laplante have been hard at work on revamping the Global Health section. Among the new features will be a Global Health Blog, allowing students to share

their stories from around the world! Additionally, our Pre-Departure Training documentary *First, Do No Harm* can now be viewed online!

- *Medical Student Spotlight* has gotten off to a modest start, but we can definitely expand it further. I'd like to renew my call for all medical students with great initiatives to share their stories and let the rest of the world benefit from their experience! As the *Spotlight* grows, we'll have to examine whether the current format is sustainable or whether moving to a more organized database will be necessary.
- There have been some discussions at the Executive level regarding whether we should make our website bilingual. Difficulty arises in that automated translation software is unreliable and human translation is incredibly expensive and/or time-intensive. Though this remains a long-term goal, it is not something that we were able to achieve with our website this year. Next year's Executive should consider where they would like to go with this, and what priority it holds for them.

### CFMS Communiqués

- *CFMS Communiqués* will continue to be distributed every second Tuesday for the remainder of the academic year, with occasional exceptions for Services Communiqués. This is a duty that will be passed over to the incoming VP Communications.
- Given the feedback that MailChimp can provide us, I encourage next year's VP Comm to consider how it can be harnessed to provide an even more engaging and relevant experience to our busy members.

### Member Relations

- First-Year and Third-Year CFMS Presentations have already been sent out to reps and posted on the CFMS website. I encourage all reps who haven't already given these presentations to make sure the opportunity doesn't get lost. Each school's reps are in the best position to decide what time and format is most suitable for their students.
- Please make sure your peers sign up for the CFMS website, "like" us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and subscribe to the new Communiqué. The more routes we have to reach them, the better!

### Social Media

- The Social Media Committee will continue to keep our Facebook and Twitter pages current, and to develop new ways to make use of them. Additionally, the new VP Communications will be responsible for soliciting and selecting new members for the 2012/13 committee.

### Media Relations

- Medical student retention has been a significant issue in the media over the past year. We already have a position paper on Return of Service, in which we make constructive suggestions regarding alternatives that will retain students without coercion. It is worth following this issue to see whether any of these strategies

are implemented, or whether provinces will continue to push for mandatory service.

- In my last report, I had suggested that a Media Assistant position might help the VP Communications stay current. However, upon reflection, I ultimately decided against proposing this, as it makes more sense for one person to be fully informed rather than having pertinent information split between multiple people.

#### Relationship with CAIR

- The knowledge that I have gained as a VP Comm has been invaluable at the CAIR board table. Further, this is also one of our most important relationships. I would recommend that the CAIR Rep position continue to be an optional-but-recommended part of the VP Communications role.

#### **IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The VP Communications fills many important roles to the organization, simultaneously, leading to a very busy portfolio. Though I do not recommend shifting any major duties to other Executive officers, I think it is important to keep this in mind as the role develops down the road. There is so much to do day-to-day that it is very difficult to introduce any new, innovative ideas within the position.

The help that I've received from our General Manager, Rosemary, has made so much of what we've done possible. However, I'd like to add my voice to those who have recommended hiring an administrative assistant to help alleviate the workload.