

# Sarah S. Cox

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I'm a practiced, professional design and content expert who enjoys being involved in every aspect of creating quality publications and communications. I offer:

- Genuine enthusiasm for creative and collaborative processes.
  - Eighteen years leading design and content efforts.
  - Fastidious adherence to style, with creative touches.
  - Initiative, tenacity, and dependability in all aspects of my work ethic.
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## National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Arlington, VA

*Associate Director of Communications for Editorial and Creative Services* | April 2003 – present

### PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Led organization through three rebrands** to reflect values implemented by new boards. This included updated color palettes, fonts, styles, and standardization of templates and editorial style, and related education for staff. Updated major communications vehicles and publications for consistency.
- **Transformed *The Journal of College Admission*** from a 24-page peer-reviewed print journal into a 70-page digital magazine that includes exceptional news-you-can-use, counseling models, tips, professional interviews, research content, human interest stories, data/infographics, and more. This included an overhaul of content and visual style. Increased reader engagement by 2,700 unique readers, in addition to its established audience of 23,000.
- **Created an association-wide brand strategy** to plan for the creation, dissemination, and governance of brand utilizations across departments and functional areas—a system that plans and manages all visuals produced. The main goals of this plan are to ensure the organization is using content to its maximum potential to create visibility and to assess whether it meets organizational goals.
- **Supported the shift to virtual-only events** as related to COVID-19 restrictions. This included creating visuals for messaging informing members, students, and the public about the shift; optimizing the website for virtual events and related content; and creating additional visual collateral for new or altered events, including badges, series frameworks, and social media art. Increased outreach to professionals who may not have had funding for live events and positively impacted the overall organizational budget by approximately \$4M.
- **Created a diversity, inclusion, and access strategy for content** produced by the communications department, including *The Journal of College Admission*, the bulletin, blog, website, and social media, to illuminate DEI issues and ensure all voices are represented. For example, the implementation of standing columns on issue of race and antiracist work; broadening the cache of interviewees and sources to include and uplift those who are often underrepresented; creating events and accompanying resources for a wider array of demographics and job types, and ensuring broad representation in photography, videography, and illustrations.
- **Participated in leadership group for increased engagement with the organization.** Solely responsible for the creative for campaigns for renewed engagement. Evolved narratives and accompanying creative that supported mission and reworked value propositions. Campaign resulted in the onboarding of 9,000 new members.
- **Volunteered to be interim social media manager** for the organization, including creating strategy for both public- and member-facing media and organizational content. This included planning campaigns, authoring posts, creating art, video, and other multimedia, researching tags and handles, and managing implementation with communications assistant. Posts and engagement increased approximately 33%. Onboarded social media consultant and led staff in content procurement and cohesion.

## DAILY WORK

- Direct all small- and large-scale projects' visual and brand aspects creatively ensuring consistent look and feel.
- Collaborate with marketing department and manage marketing briefs to plan multi-channel campaigns to promote products, including market research, identifying opportunities, designing marketing collateral, and organizing branding tactics.
- Brainstorm with and direct work of in-house content creators, including creating schedules, monitoring workstreams, and researching and hiring freelance authors, designers, photographers, videographers, and other artists or specialists to build creative solutions and gather all resources needed to complete projects. Supervise cross-departmental content providers and manage and mentor communications assistant and other staff members wanting to expand their knowledge of brand and content strategy.
- Lead conceptualization and development of imagery through audience research, marketing strategy and brand awareness, and design best practices (typographic, layout, balance, cohesion). Guide leadership, team, and freelancers through rationale for creative decisions via informal meeting or formal presentations to create buy-in and excitement about the visual package.
- Gather, interpret, and synthesize complex information/messages into clear, original, and visually appealing communications packages.
- Strategize and collaborate with director of communications and other staff teams to recommend creative solutions, schedule new and standing projects, and marketing plans, while managing all campaign aspects, from review, to assessing goals and budget, to design, delivery, and evaluation.
- Lead digital and print creative strategy and processes, including exploration of new technologies and services. Guide concepts from design, review, approval, and printing/publication with emphasis on visual and brand quality, balancing multiple projects simultaneously. Solely accountable for final development and production of creative assets.
- Lead content and design planning for *The Journal of College Admission* (flagship publication for the association, read by 23,000 members and subscribers from varying educational professions and university libraries) by monitoring current trends, industry needs, and national news. Edit, design, and fulfill print and digital editions. Initiate enhancements to ensure content is timely, informative, intersectional, and inclusive, and targeted for various audiences.
- Budget all creative assets for the organization; assist in other budget areas. Negotiate sponsorships and partnerships for cost-effective placement of ads. Work with vendors and expand vendor relationships for best pricing. Educate leadership on opportunities for cost savings, such as moving the journal online, saving \$100K annually.
- Support staff in branding best practices. Spearhead internal communications regarding communications standards.
- Oversee development of internal and external values-aligned short- and long-term brand strategies all messaging, publications and multimedia, and assessing effectiveness to support user needs.
- Seek education about innovative products, technologies, and strategies and condense for leadership to review in new prospect assessments.
- Manage publication delivery systems—print, mail, website, e-pubs, Amazon, PageRaft, flipbooks, blog, etc. Oversee subscription management, working with print vendors, Information Systems, and UX contractors.
- Work with leaders—brainstorm ways to improve content and visual appeal/cohesion, run meetings, manage projects, conduct needs assessments, take minutes, and create presentations and reports on association creative efforts. Attend and present at leadership meetings and frequent staff meetings to share how brand plays a crucial part of the association's strategic priorities.
- Assist leadership on planning website structure, leading dialogue about optimal user experience, SEO, and visual interest. Strategize content and optimal placement for new webpages with team; choose, edit, and position graphics site-wide; and proof pages for consistent style and voice.

## CONSULTING

### U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General, Washington, DC

*Data Visualization Specialist* | August 2018 – present

- Review reports to ensure cohesive presentations of information, including data connected to recommendations.
- Provide guidance on how to make reports scannable, emphasizing points needed to make the case, and clarifying how data should be sorted and presented.
- Interpret scientific data and create graphic interpretations to illustrate points that support recommendations for lay audiences.
- Work with multiple senior-level clients, such as the deputy inspector general and audit directors.
- Train staff on how to adjust graphics, and inventory and package graphics for department quarterly reports.

## FREELANCE PROJECTS

- Graphic designer for Avid Core, LLC strategic communications, Alexandria, VA
- Visual branding partner for The Next Step Charter School Washington, DC
- Lay out *Insights* journal for the Independent Educational Consultants Association, Fairfax, VA
- Lay out *Passages* publications, forms, and more on request for National Center for Family Philanthropy, Washington, DC

## SKILLS & ABILITIES

- Skilled communicator possessing the attention to detail needed to guarantee the highest-level visuals.
- Expertise in graphic design, photo manipulation, illustration, and typography with Adobe CC—InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat Pro—Canva, and Animoto. (MAC OS).
- Experience writing, designing, and updating branding guides.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office suite, SharePoint, Salesforce and other data/website CMSs; major social media platforms; and analytics suites, such as Google Analytics.
- Team leadership of creative contributors and cross-departmental resources; practiced at playing to team members' strengths and creating an atmosphere of trust and support.
- Experience managing all aspects of project delivery while maintaining inclusion, participation, and high group morale.
- Skilled at gathering, interpreting, and synthesizing complex information/messages into clear, original, and visually appealing content.
- Experience working with marketing to ensure visuals meet goals for segmenting, targeting, and delivering product messaging via appropriate platforms to several audiences.
- Experience training staff—at all levels of subject knowledge—in branding, design, and communications fundamentals.
- Flexible, effective, and efficient under tight deadline pressure and able to communicate with a focus on fast problem-solving. Able to juggle several projects simultaneously.
- Skilled guide of critical discussions with a focus on clarifying goals—ensuring all parties are focused and open to collaboration—to improve workflow. Able to navigate discussions about crucial issues and take appropriate action.
- Self-guided learner adept at problem-solving by learning new skills needed to execute projects.

## **MEMBERSHIPS & VOLUNTEERISM**

- Member, Association Media & Publishing
- Member, American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
- Member, Coalition of Education Association Publications (CEAP)
- Volunteer Graphic Designer for The Child & Family Network Centers (Alexandria, VA)
- Girl Scout Troop 56055 Leader

## **EDUCATION**

James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA | May 2002

Bachelor of Arts, School of Media Arts and Design | Minor in Creative Writing