

Kaitlyn Wells

Freelance Journalist & Higher Ed Digital Engager

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Summary

Kaitlyn Wells is the Assistant Director of Admissions at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). She oversees the digital recruitment and retention strategy for the graduate school's admissions office, trains staff on digital engagement best practices, and is the resident memeologist. She co-manages SIPA's social media profiles -- more than 58,000 followers -- including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, and is the founding editor of their Instagram profile. She also runs the school's admissions blog, which was named one of 2016's best admissions and financial aid blogs by consumer finance website CreditDonkey.com. Kaitlyn has worked in nonprofit and higher ed communications for six years. Her commentary on drug prevention, education, and intervention has been featured in the Houston Chronicle, The Bay Area Citizen and The Daily News.

As a freelance writer, she specializes in health, lifestyle, finance, and technology reporting. Her work has appeared on ABCnews.com, MarketWatch.com, MSNMoney.com, TIME.com, and TheSimpleDollar.com, WashingtonPost.com, and in Consumer Reports, ShopSmart, Urban Home and the Wall Street Journal Sunday, among others. She's written children's and young-adult book and television reviews for DiverseKidsBooks.org/MixedDiversityReads.com. She's also contributed to "Forty Acres of Fun," an anthology highlighting the history of The University of Texas at Austin. Her recent consultancy projects include the book launch for a self-published fiction writer, content creation for a Fortune 500 telecommunications company, and content creation and evaluation for a retail electricity provider.

She has a Master of Science degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, and a Bachelor of Journalism degree from The University of Texas at Austin.

Note: Due to conflicts of interest, please do not email Kaitlyn regarding higher education pitches and queries.

Experience

Assistant Director of Admissions & Digital Engagement at Columbia University - School of International and Public Affairs

October 2014 - Present

- Create blog posts and manage SIPA's Admissions Blog and website.
- Lead designer for the Admissions Blog's redesign.
- Actively maintain SIPA's various social media outlets---more than 58,000 followers---on behalf of the Admissions Office, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

- Founder of SIPA's Instagram account. Grew account to 3,900+ followers in 1.5 years using an ad-free, slow-growth methodology.
- Strategically plan social media and email-marketing campaigns targeting vital admissions audiences.
- Plan all aspects of the annual open house event for 400 guests and manage an event budget of \$60,000.
- Assist with processing approximately 3,500 applications for admission annually.
- Serve on several admissions committees, and read, evaluate, and summarize 400+ applications for admission.
- Annually train new members of the Admissions Committee on how to read, evaluate and summarize applications for admission.
- Develop and supervise the SIPA Admissions Ambassador Program, which is made up of student volunteers who support the Admissions Office's recruitment efforts.
- Manage the annual phone-a-thons for admitted students.
- Develop the annual communications plan for SIPA's Admissions Office as part of the Dean's overall strategic plan.
- Represent SIPA as a guest presenter and attend cross-country events throughout the year to recruit prospective students.

Achievements:

- Increased student application submission rate by 85% over a course of three months, compared to previous year, by strategically communicating with prospective students across social media channels and in email campaigns.
- Increased Facebook followers organically by 10.5% over five months, compared to an advertising model of 15.8% over five months. (Annual growth rate was 17.6% organic vs. 23.8% paid.)
- Redesigned the SIPA MIA/MPA Admissions Blog, which resulted in an increase of the monthly average visitor rate by 42% and monthly average view rate by 57% over six months.

Freelance Writer at Various Publications

August 2013 - Present

Write technology, lifestyle and home and garden news for Consumer Reports magazine, ConsumerReports.org, Qualcomm.com, ShopSmart magazine and Techlicious.com, among others. Contribute personal finance stories to MarketWatch.com, TheSimpleDollar.com and The Wall Street Journal Sunday, among others. Discuss trending consumer, technology and finance stories for radio segments, such as "All Slides with Ann Fisher" and "The Wall Street Journal This Morning," among others. Write reviews about children's and young adult books and children's TV programming for DiverseKidsBooks.org (formerly MixedDiversityReads.com).

Contributing Writer at Consumer Reports

June 2013 - December 2015 (2 years 6 months)

[August 2013–December 2015] Pitched and wrote compelling copy for the blog and its affiliates as a contributing writer on technology, health, and home and garden topics.

[June 2013–August 2013] Researched consumer trends, analyzed technician reports, pitched and wrote articles for the front-of-book and the back-of-book of Consumer Reports magazine as an editorial intern. Wrote additional articles for the blog and copy edited and fact-checked the magazine as needed.

Personal Finance Reporter/Editorial Intern at MarketWatch

February 2014 - May 2014 (3 months)

Researched, pitched, and wrote stories on personal finance and consumer-related topics for MarketWatch.com (formerly Smart Money). Wrote the Personal Finance Daily newsletter. Appeared as a guest expert on 'The Wall Street Journal This Morning' radio show and on MarketWatch Radio Network's affiliate radio stations–KCBS-San Francisco, KRLD-AM-Dallas, WCCO-Minneapolis among them.

Editorial Intern at Nautilus Magazine

March 2013 - February 2014 (11 months)

Researched, analyzed and reported on the latest scientific developments and trends. Fact-checked, copy edited, and pitched and wrote articles for the quarterly magazine and website.

Video Editor & Reporter

January 2013 - May 2013 (4 months)

Wrote movie reviews, covered events, and created original video content for the student-run website under the direction of Cyndi Stivers, the current editor of AOL.com. Spearheaded and edited all video projects. Curated and edited photo galleries and multimedia packages for publication. Led the production and codesigned the semester's print publication.

Reporter

August 2012 - December 2012 (4 months)

General assignment and beat reporter who covered business, crime, economics, education, and sports in Harlem for the digital publication. Contributed breaking news reporting on Hurricane Sandy and Election 2012 coverage. Assisted with website design, created graphics, and produced original video content for the student-run website under the direction of Paula Span, a blogger for The New York Times.

Media Coordinator & Webmaster - Volunteer at Friends of League City Animal Shelter

May 2010 - August 2012 (2 years 3 months)

Wrote press releases and guest columns about shelter issues. Redesigned the website, increasing visitor traffic by 64 percent in 2 weeks. Designed brochures and flyers. Co-authored a 33-page summary report and ordinance paper outlining recommendations to curb euthanasia rates. [Post-2012: Occasionally answer community inquiries online and perform maintenance on the website.]

Communications Coordinator at Bay Area Council On Drugs & Alcohol, Inc. (BACODA)

April 2011 - July 2012 (1 year 3 months)

Wrote press releases and guest columns on general health, drug use prevention and policy topics, while maintaining duties as webmaster and social media editor for a non-profit with the largest service population in the state. Created and designed promotional materials, such as annual reports, brochures, business cards,

e-blasts, logos, press kits and print advertisements. Developed internal communications and social media policies and procedures. Photographed and videotaped events. Redsigned company logos. Taught an annual state-mandated, 8-hour media awareness course for credentialed counselors.

Webmaster at Bay Area Council On Drugs & Alcohol, Inc. (BACODA)

March 2005 - July 2012 (7 years 4 months)

Redesigned company website and added an online storefront, increasing visitor traffic by 220 percent.

Created company blog and social media presence. Oversaw blog and social media entries. Trained a staff of 50 on social media etiquette and media awareness.

Prevention Specialist at Bay Area Council On Drugs & Alcohol, Inc. (BACODA)

July 2009 - May 2011 (1 year 10 months)

Became an expert in substance abuse prevention-based research. Taught alcohol, tobacco and drug education classes to 500 elementary students each semester. Guest lectured at area high schools and at-risk facilities.

Taught weekly parenting courses as a certified instructor in Positive Action PreK-12 and parenting curriculums. Obtained 200 continuing education credit hours in ethics, drug intervention techniques, HIV awareness and cultural competence.

Research Assistant | Editor & Producer of The Agenda Online

February 2009 - September 2009 (7 months)

Coordinated Parker Media's conference series, The Agenda, for 100 congressional staff, news media and executive branch members in Washington, D.C. Researched a book project for Richard Parker, a syndicated columnist for The McClatchy Company.

Copy Editor (Formerly Editorial Intern) at Urban Home Magazine

June 2008 - January 2009 (7 months)

[August 2008– Jan. 2009] Contracted at the conclusion of the internship to edit the Summer 2008 and Fall 2008 issues of the magazine.

[June 2008–August 2008] Learned all editing and production aspects of a quarterly interior design magazine as an editorial intern. Fact-checked and contributed content to new products and trends departments. Ghost wrote “Letter from the Editor” section. Wrote a 2,000-word cover story about the rebirth of wallpaper in interior design. Wrote additional articles about home decor, popular kitchen tech gadgets and luxury rental properties.

Teaching Assistant at The University of Texas at Austin

August 2008 - December 2008 (4 months)

Piloted a competitive program and served as a Transfer-Year Interest Groups (TrIG) mentor and lead an undergraduate class of 18-25 non-traditional and transfer students. Created curriculum for the weekly course, scheduled guest speakers, held office hours, and offered support to new students as they transitioned to University life. The curriculum covered campus resources, study skills, time management strategies, internship and career advising, and networking, among other topics. The course instructor was re-assigned

early in the program so I was solely responsible for the progress of the students for the duration of the course.

Information Specialist | Executive Administrative Assistant at Bay Area Council On Drugs & Alcohol, Inc. (BACODA)

June 2004 - August 2007 (3 years 2 months)

Categorized and prioritized all meeting requests, emails and snail mail for the Chief Executive Officer.

Wrote thank you letters to donors. Streamlined office forms by designing new templates with step-by-step directions. Handled client information in a non-routine, confidential setting. Triaged client needs and matched them with appropriate caseworkers. Developed new filing system for the office.

Education

Columbia University in the City of New York

Master of Science (M.S.), Print Journalism - Magazine, 2012 - 2013

Activities and Societies: Society of Professional Journalists at Columbia University – Community Service Committee, Columbia University Association of Black Journalists – Multimedia Committee Chair

The University of Texas at Austin

Bachelor of Journalism, Magazine Writing and Editing, 2007 - 2009

Activities and Societies: VP of Publications for the Association for Women in Communications; Zeta Phi Eta Professional fraternity; InCite Alternative Newspaper; burntORANGE Magazine; KVR News

San Jacinto College

Associate of Arts (A.A.), Journalism, 2005 - 2007

Activities and Societies: Editor of San Jacinto Times; President of Journalism Club; Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society

Honors and Awards

Newspaper Pacemaker Award, First Place, Critical Review, Second Place, Live Competition, Honorable Mention, All-USA Community College Academic Team, First Team, TexasTechnology, Entertainment, Home & Garden, Photography, Reading, Baking, Cooking, Home Improvement, DIY, Travel, Fashion

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