

Nikky Luna

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nikkyluna.com

Strategic communicator, connector, and writer with 18+ years of experience in communications, marketing, development and higher ed. recruitment.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Project Coordinator (hybrid), September 2024-July 2025

West Virginia University Healthspan Nutrition Lab, Morgantown, WV

- Supported the project planning and implementation as a contracted, grant-funded project manager for a \$969,631 USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture research study
- Helped lead and organize protocol and workflow development, participant recruitment efforts, collection of data using REDCap software, and the development and dissemination of internal and external communications
- Led provider recruitment efforts, introducing the study and coordinating communications, meetings, and the formalization of collaborative partnerships with physicians, office administrators, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, resulting in an increase from three to 77 total collaborating healthcare providers
- Led the development of a 30-page patient education handbook, coordinating with study researchers and a cross-functional marketing and communications team while providing writing, proofing, editing expertise
- Led the launch and ongoing updates of/to the lab's website, coordinating with university mixed media productions, professional technologists, and photographers
- Wrote, proofread, and edited a wide-range of study-related documents, including patient education and recruitment pieces, research manuscripts, PowerPoint presentations, and procedural documentation
- Drafted press releases and internal news announcements as needed
- Developed and managed interim reports and assets for principal investigators' research publications and presentations
- Liaised with project team and internal and external study stakeholders

Director of Development, September 2023-August 2024

The American Pops Orchestra, Washington, D.C. (remote position)

- Developed and implemented fundraising goals and strategy in conjunction with annual budget and financial needs
- Collaborated with Founder, Board President, and Board members to identify existing and prospective individual and corporate donors
- Developed/implemented the strategy for the cultivation and solicitation of new and current donors
- Managed development software (Neon CRM), implementing system audits and more regular database maintenance
- Oversaw comprehensive development approach while managing one full-time development coordinator

- Coordinated with colleagues and external contractors to develop and implement in marketing/communication deliverables
- Managed communications and all development-related logistics for eight donor events, with attendees ranging from a dozen to 200 and supported overall event strategy, planning, and implementation
- Ghost-wrote and/or edited approximately 5-10 messages a month for APO leadership, targeting prospective and current corporate/individual donors

Director, Marketing and Communications, August 2019-August 2023

West Virginia University School of Public Health, Morgantown, WV

- Directed the overall integrated communications and marketing strategy to support the school's enrollment, fundraising, and service/outreach goals
- Wrote, proofed, and edited various types of content for multiple platforms and audiences, including news stories; media pitches and advisories; e-newsletters for both internal and external constituents; leadership messaging to internal/external stakeholders; and website copy
- Developed and implemented integrated marketing communication plans to help launch three new academic programs ([Master of Science in Population Health](#); [Master of Science in Industrial Hygiene](#); [Master of Health Administration](#))
- Led the launch of a new diversity, equity, and inclusion microsite to elevate the school's multidisciplinary DEI initiatives
- Served as communications and marketing lead throughout the planning and promotion of School's 10-year anniversary, producing and coordinating a wide range of deliverables, including: interactive website; suite of branded assets; printed collateral and branded giveaways; event series; and news/website stories
- Served as primary media contact for media requests, identifying the appropriate content matter expert and coordinating logistics for in-person and virtual interviews
- Oversaw school's social media channels, providing editorial oversight, in addition to creating content and scheduling/posting content directly
- Oversaw the marketing and communications budget and operations, including the management of one full-time communications specialist, and served as primary communications/marketing point-of-contact/liaison to university-wide partners
- Served on the COVID-19 Health Sciences task force as the school's marketing/communications point

Senior Marketing Strategist, October 2018-August 2019

WVU Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute (RNI), Morgantown, WV

- Served as the organization's first dedicated marketing strategist, spearheading collaborative efforts to elevate its profile across West Virginia and beyond
- Led the planning, promoting, and execution of the [organization's inaugural summit, 'Breaking Barriers.'](#) (from the comms./marketing perspective) and dedication of the RNI's newly renovated 60,000 sq.-ft. Innovation Center—which included the coordination of a private tour of the facility for Senator John D. Rockefeller IV and members of his family and senior staff
- Wrote, proofed, and edited news stories, marketing collateral, talking points, and leadership presentations highlighting research breakthroughs

- Helped coordinate the development of marketing assets to support patient acquisition, including brochures, digital signage, and video
- Supported the development and advancement of strategic initiatives through recurring planning sessions with internal and external partners and stakeholders
- Led the logistical planning for on-site interview with PBS News journalist Miles O'Brien and team to [cover a first-in-the-world procedure](#)
- Coordinated logistics for [RNI executive chair for TedXWVU](#), including overseeing the editing process for multimedia slide deck; leading artwork procurement; liaising with cross-functional teams; and working with the executive chair on overall presentation, providing detailed feedback following the production rehearsal
- Served as primary in-house point for the [production of Breaking Barriers](#), a video promoting the RNI's 2019 summit and building dedication, coordinating on-site videography, photography, and overall editing and approval process
- Provided pre- and post-interview prep to executive chair and helped coordinate media inquiries, serving as on-site logistics point of contact

Communications Manager, January 2016-October 2018

WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design, Morgantown, WV

- Supported the college's recruitment and development goals through identifying, developing, and promoting content for print and digital platforms, tailored to a wide range of audiences
- Served as chief editor and dedicated project manager for the [Davis College's 150th anniversary magazine](#), a 100-page, special edition publication
- Helped plan and implement the school's 150th birthday celebration, which included a series of events and multiple marcom deliverables
- Served as writer and editor for College's biannual magazine
- Wrote, proofed, and edited news stories, media pitches, and internal news announcements on a weekly basis
- Helped plan, create, and post content to the College's social media channels

Director of Donor Relations and Campaign Manager, August 2013-December 2015

WVU Foundation, Morgantown, WV

- Supported the cultivation and stewardship efforts to further engage WVU donors, friends, and partners by providing direction and strategic oversight of the donor relations program
- Developed and implemented integrated marketing communication plans, tailored to multiple audience segments
- Managed the stewardship process of donors who supported WVU and its affiliates, with a special emphasis on donors at the major gift level (\$25K) and higher
- Oversaw the planning and implementation of internal and external events and special programming, including pre- and post-event communications
- Led the development and implementation of a robust cultivation and stewardship strategy to enhance engagement and recognize individuals and corporations—spanning planned giving to annual, major, and transformational giving levels

Institutional Advancement (various roles) and Admissions, July 2005-July 2007; July-2009-July 2013 | Alderson Broaddus University, Philippi, WV

Vice President for Institutional Advancement, July 2011-July 2013

- Led the university in raising over \$15 million in gifts and pledges in FY 2012, including a one-time \$8.5M gift-in-kind, and an increase in alumni participation rate
- Oversaw all development, alumni relations and advancement-related activities and communications and operations, including the management of a ten-member team
- Developed and wrote multiple gift proposals and stewardship reports
- Identified, qualified, and cultivated prospective donors, including prospective Board members and Alumni Council members
- Served on the President's Cabinet and various committees, including the university's Strategic Planning Task Force

Major Gifts Officer/Dir., Foundation and Government Relations, Aug. 2010-June 2011

- Managed a portfolio of approximately 125 prospects and donors, leading the identification, qualification, solicitation, and stewardship strategy
- Developed grant-writing skills and collaborated with other stakeholders to identify funding needs and help prioritize and communicate organizational needs to potential supporters
- Assisted with the planning and implementation of alumni and donor-related events on- and off-campus
- Promoted to vice president for Advancement amidst the onboarding of a new university president and an institutional reorganization

Director of Alumni Relations, July 2009-August 2010

- Engaged alumni and friends with the institution through the planning and implementation of on- and off-campus events and the development and execution of multi-tiered communications
- Wrote, proofed, and edited content for a variety of channels, including alumni newsletters, magazines, fundraising materials, website, and social media
- Recruited and organized volunteers and event sponsors for approximately a dozen events, including the institution's annual Homecoming
- Provided oversight and guidance to the 25-member Alumni Council—the governing body of the university's Alumni Association—including planning and executing the Council's triannual meetings
- Established the university's first Student Alumni Association, enrolling 14 active members in its inaugural year

Admissions Counselor, July 2005-July 2007

- Grew the applicant pool by 25% within the first six months of inception and maintained applicant growth, evidenced by a 54% increase in deposited students in subsequent year
- Planned and executed quarterly communication plans, targeting prospective students and families

- Planned individual campus visits, coordinating with faculty, coaches, and university administrators and serving as primary campus liaison for prospective students and their family members
- Represented the university at approximately 80-100 college fairs and high school visits per year, engaging students, teachers, financial aid counselors, and prospective students' families through formal presentations and Q&A sessions

EDUCATION

Master of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications, August 2012
West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va.

Bachelor of Arts in Communications and Applied Music/Vocal Performance, May 2005
Alderson-Broaddus College, Philippi, W.Va.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Communications Volunteer, April 2024-January 2025
WV Faith Collective

Helped plan, develop and execute communication and community-building initiatives on behalf of the WV Faith Collective, with a focus on a storytelling project featuring Black women in West Virginia. Recruited and provided continued coordination and guidance of seven volunteer marketing/comms professionals. Assisted with a search for a prospective communications position, assisting with job description and interviewing/vetting candidates.

Mentor, CreateAthon@WVU, April 2018
West Virginia University Reed College of Media

Served as a mentor for this annual student-led event, during which teams develop a comprehensive implementation plan and deliverables for local nonprofits within a 24-hour period. Provided guidance on planning and strategy; helped facilitate work sessions; and provided proofing and editing support.

Member, Board of Directors, October 2015-January 2018
Liberia, Inc. (<https://www.liberawv.com/>)

Served on fundraising committee and provided volunteer support for events and communications. Initiated and helped foster connections between Executive Director, fundraising advisors, and prospective supporters.