YOUR TICKET TO ANYWHERE

How a Communications degree opened doors I never knew existed.



Nicole Cassis
SVP Communications, Newfold Digital | Interim CMO, Network Solutions Group
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Freshman year • Madison dorms

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

THE QUESTION EVERYONE ASKED

“You’re majoring in what?”

Changing my major to Communication felt like a lightning bolt on a sunny day.

Because for nearly 20 years, my sights had been set on **one thing...**

THE ORIGINAL PLAN:

BECOME AN ASTRONAUT.

Before Communications, I was all-in on science.









THEN CAME THE QUESTION:

“WHAT ARE YOU EVER GOING TO DO WITH A COMMUNICATIONS DEGREE?”

Maybe they were asking the wrong question...



A COMMS DEGREE IS YOUR TICKET TO ANYWHERE.

Flip the question: **It's not "What *can* you do?" — it's "What *can't* you do?"**

1

Highly versatile

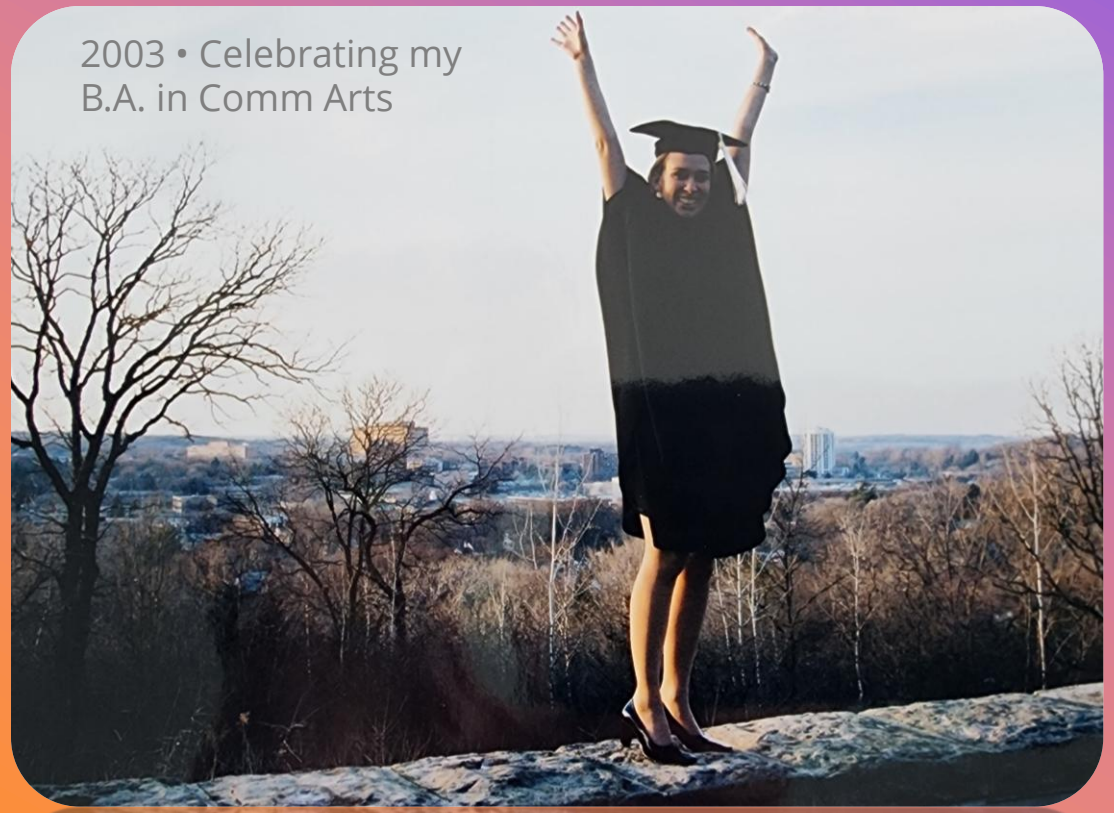
+ Corporations, NGOs, academia, SMBs, etc.
+ Finance, tech, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, etc.
+ Local, national, international

2

Foundation you can keep building on

+ Opens doors to multiple specialties and career paths (PR, social, internal comms, content and more.)

I GRADUATED WITHOUT A PERFECT PLAN BUT WITH REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE



- Completed in three years, with honors
- Worked full-time
- Leader in a non-profit org I had co-founded

No formal internship. No real mentor. No long-term career plan. But I was already building real-world experience, and I had a next step.











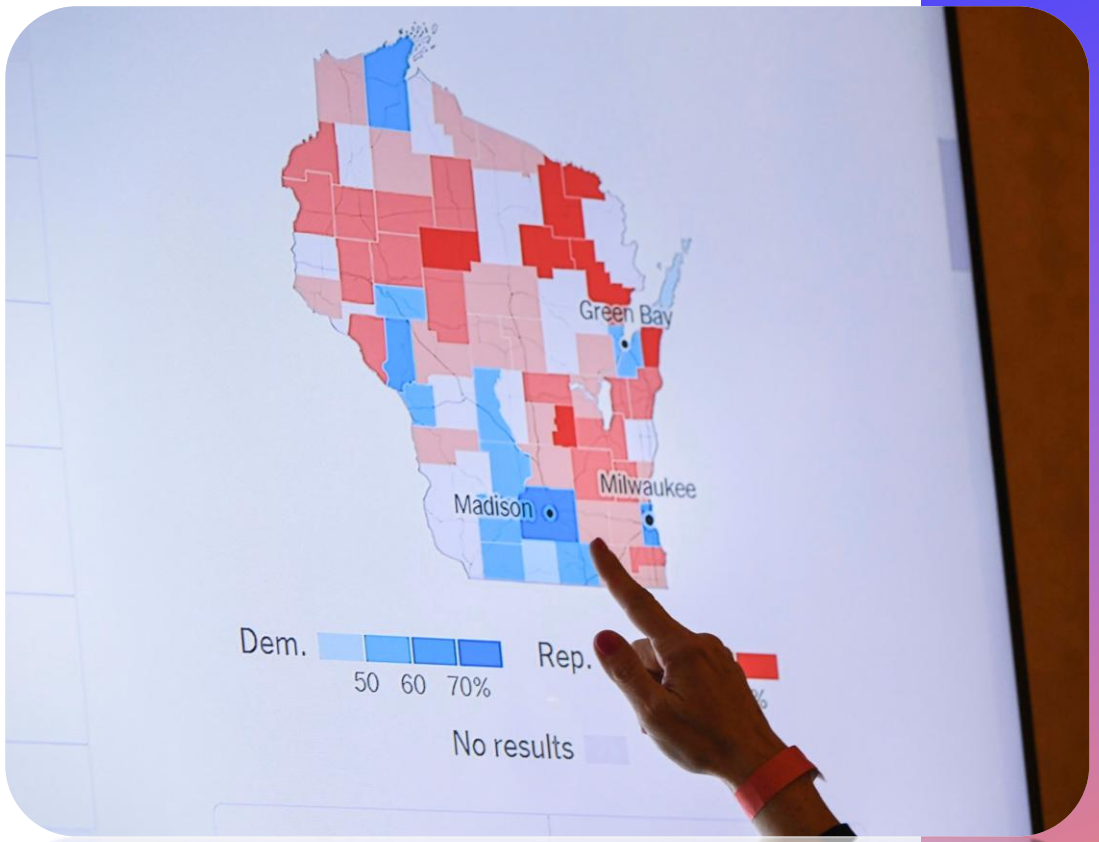
HELLO, SIERRA LEONE

My first real-world Communications role took me halfway around the world.









AFTER RETURNING TO THE US, I LED A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Writing, persuasion and public speaking became real-world tools.





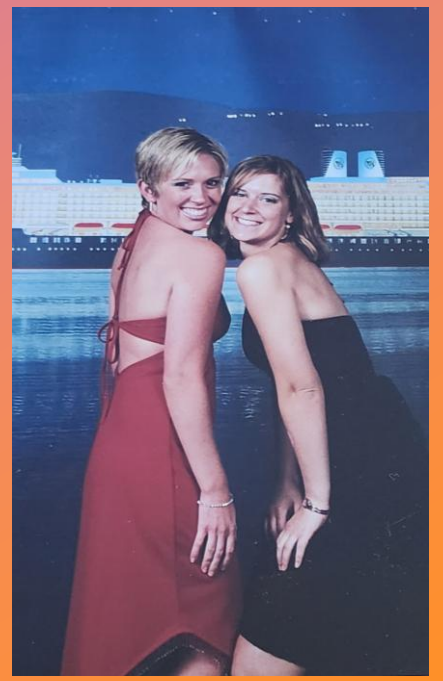
WELCOME ABOARD!
SHIP LIFE





Communication skills translated to live audiences and global teams.









Ni Hao, China!

One opportunity opened three more: publishing/editing, United Nations, teaching (Ford Motor Company and kids!)















EGYPT





My writing portfolio opened the door to journalism in Egypt, and across the Middle East.









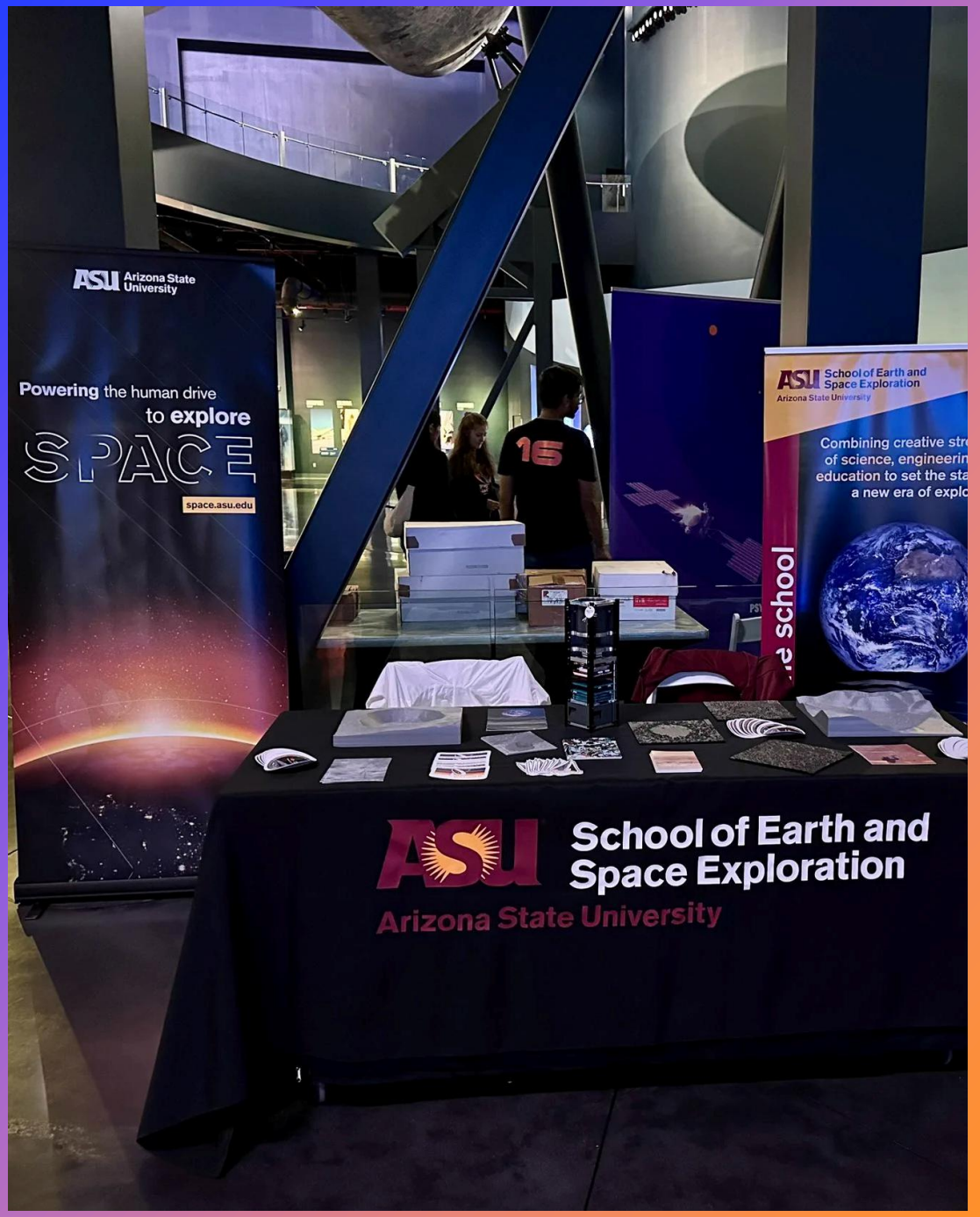


THE PLOT TWIST: COMMUNICATIONS BROUGHT ME BACK TO SPACE

I thought changing my major meant leaving science behind. Years later, Communications became the bridge back.

Arizona State University | School of Earth & Space Exploration

- **Hired without an in-person interview**
  someone took a chance on what I had already built.
- **Owned a broad communications remit**
  PR, content, web, social, marketing and more.
- **Learned by doing**
  supporting scientists, NASA missions and a growing new school while building my portfolio.

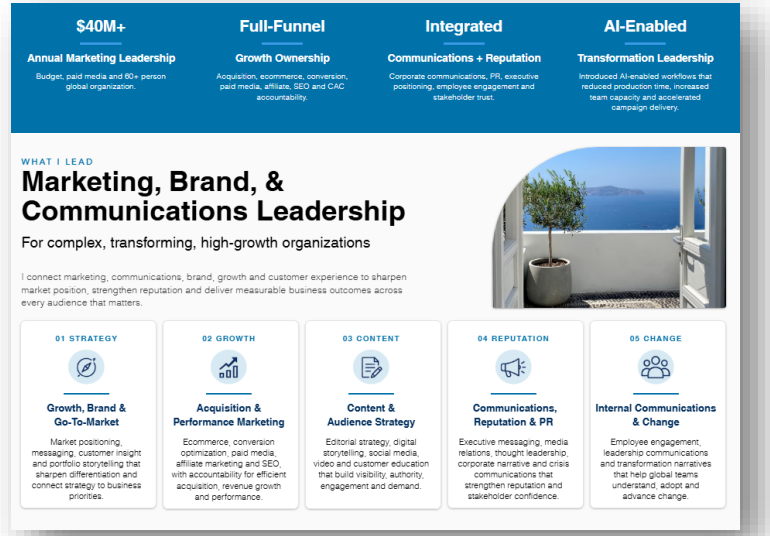


BUILD PROOF BEFORE YOU NEED IT

Don’t wait until you're applying for the job to start collecting proof that you can do the work.

A portfolio turns “*I can do that*” into “*Here’s what I’ve done*.”

- **CLASS PROJECTS** — Campaigns, presentations, research, writing samples
- **VOLUNTEER WORK** — Nonprofits, church, community groups, events
- **STUDENT ORGS** — Social content, newsletters, promotion, leadership
- **SELF-CREATED WORK** — Blogs, mock campaigns, portfolio pieces, case studies





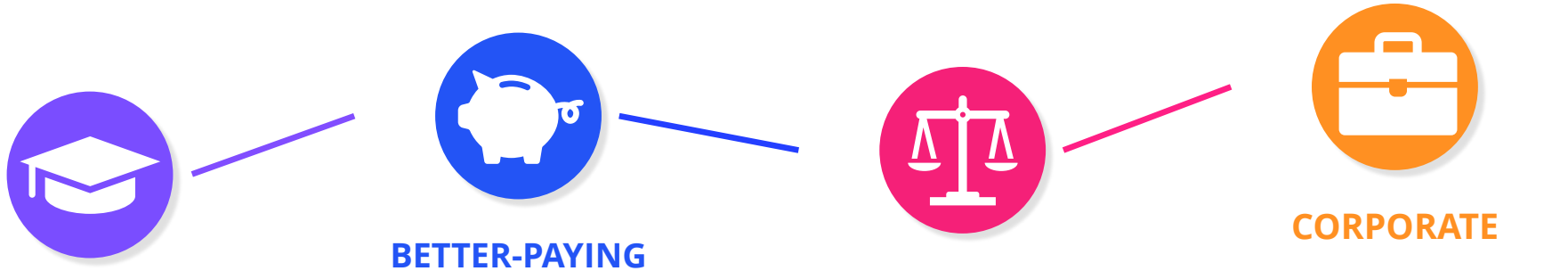
NicoleCassis.com

Think of your portfolio as a living proof file; not a final, perfect website.

Show the work.
Explain the impact.

NOT EVERY CAREER MOVE HAS TO BE “UP” TO MOVE YOU FORWARD

I made intentional moves to collect the experience, skills and exposure I’d need for what came next.



ACADEMIA

Build the foundation.

BETTER-PAYING UNIVERSITY ROLE

Increase earning power.

FOR-PROFIT LAW SCHOOL

Gain business + commercial exposure

CORPORATE

Build scale, breadth + leadership experience.

▲

Sometimes the smartest career move isn’t a promotion.
It’s the move that gives you **the experience you’ll need next.**

TODAY:

COMMUNICATIONS + MARKETING + BUSINESS

My Communications degree became the foundation for broader leadership from storytelling and reputation to growth, ecommerce and business performance.

SVP Communications

Newfold Digital

Communications, PR, reputation, internal comms, executive comms and content.

Interim CMO

Network Solutions Group

Acquisition, ecommerce, performance marketing, brand, content and growth.



Leadership communications at scale


Executive storytelling


Brand + video production

THE LESSON

A Communications degree didn’t box me in; it became the base I kept building on.

WHAT A MODERN COMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATION CAN LOOK LIKE



Nicole Cassis
SVP Communications



Internal Comms,
Sr Manager



Reputation
Manager

HIRING

Public Relations
Manager, Sr.



SEO & Content
Strategy, Manager



Social Media
Manager



Head of
Global Video



Video
Strategist



Customer
Insights



Competitive
Intelligence

WHAT I LOOK FOR WHEN I HIRE COMMUNICATORS

A degree opens the door. These are the skills that help you walk through it.

01

Strong writing

Clear, concise and audience-first.

02

Curiosity + judgment

Ask good questions and make complex things understandable.

03

Business fluency

Understand the goal, customer and what success looks like.

04

Digital + AI fluency

Use modern tools without outsourcing your thinking.

05

Ownership

Bring ideas, solve problems and show me what you've built.

THE NEXT STEP DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A NEW JOB

Build beyond your title.

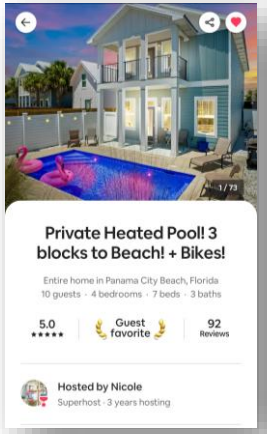
Look for ways to gain skills, experiences and ownership outside your day job.

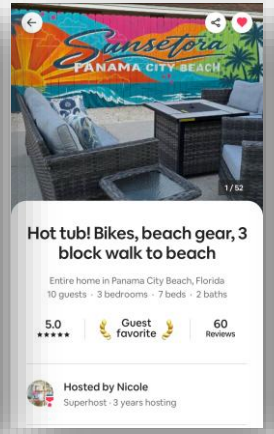


SIDE VENTURES TURN COMMS SKILLS INTO BUSINESS SKILLS

For me, Airbnb rentals became a hands-on classroom for marketing, operations, automation and ownership.









WHAT IT TAUGHT ME

1. **Marketing drives demand**
   Positioning, listing copy, photos, pricing and reviews matter.

2. **Operations shape the brand**
   Guest experience, service and problem solving show up fast.

3. **Ownership teaches the numbers**
   Revenue, costs, risk and decisions become very real when they are yours.

3 THINGS I WOULD ABSOLUTELY DO AGAIN

1. **Say "YES"** to unique and global opportunities.

2. Build breadth through cross-functional Marketing + Communications roles.

3. Earn my master's degree while working at the university.

3 THINGS I WISH I HAD DONE

1. Invested earlier in building my business and finance acumen.

2. Stepped into the quarterback role sooner, instead of being the order taker.

3. Trusted my judgment sooner.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING:
A Communications Degree gives you options

- **Versatility** to move across roles and industries
- **A strong foundation** to keep growing, adapting and advancing
- **Opportunity** to take your career in directions you may never have imagined

Your degree opens the door.
What you build with it and which doors you walk through is up to you.



THANK YOU

Nicole Cassis

Marketing, Growth & Communications Executive

LinkedIn: /in/nicolecassis