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Susan Cook, Dean of the Community School of Performing Arts

Susan Cook has over 25 years of experience in arts administration. Her career began in the Chicago area where she held progressively more senior positions at the Merit School of Music, Sherwood Community Music School at Columbia College Chicago, and Midwest Young Artists.

Prior to her appointment at Colburn, Susan served as Dean, The Royal Conservatory School (RCS), in Toronto. Working closely and collaboratively with her staff, Susan reinvigorated the community school by growing and developing an extensive and holistic music education model for music lovers of all ages, with a clear continuum of instruction from infancy through adulthood. She created numerous new programs and classes for the RCS including a new comprehensive band program that offers a tiered model of group and individual musical studies, over 30 March break and summer music camps that now attract more than 600 students, new "Learn at Lunch" classes for adults, and specialized early childhood classes for students with special needs. With a strong commitment to collaboration and community engagement, Susan successfully created and grew free community engagement opportunities at the RCS such as the annual Wide Open House, a recruitment event attracting 5,000 participants; Holidays in Harmony, an adult community engagement opportunity; and Free Band Days, a band program showcase. Possessing strong business acumen, Susan built fruitful partnerships with organizations around the city, increasing the RCS's visibility and allowing it to serve a larger segment of the community. Throughout her tenure, Susan focused on strengthening the Conservatory's customer services experiences, communication, and brand awareness. As a result of her efforts, the RCS increased its earned revenue by over 25% in three years. Susan embraces a collaborative approach to management and is committed to building and maintaining musical communities through staff, student, parent and faculty relationships.

Susan's passion for delivering high quality music education began with her career as a saxophonist. Susan has had an active teaching and playing career spanning over 30 years. She received her Master of Music Performance from Northwestern University, and Premier Prix du Saxophone at the National Conservatoire of Bordeaux. Susan also served on the faculty of DePaul University from 1994–2014 and Carthage College for seven years. She has toured with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti, and performed with many of Chicago's premiere orchestras including Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Joeffrey Ballet, and Chicago Opera Theatre. She has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, notably The Canada Council and Saskatchewan Arts Board and was the first saxophonist to receive the Grand Prize in Canada's National Music Festival in 1987.

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