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COCA APPOINTS INDIGO K. SAMS AS PRESIDENT & CEO

ST. LOUIS (January 9, 2023)—[COCA](https://www.cocastl.org), the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the U.S. and a leader in innovative arts education, announced Indigo K. Sams as its new President & CEO. She brings more than 30 years of experience in nonprofit management, youth development, facilities operations, resource development, and human resources to COCA. Sams becomes just the third person to helm the organization following former Executive Director Kelly Pollock and Founding Executive Director Stephanie Riven. Sams will begin her new role on February 14.

Sams will join COCA following a 17-year tenure in various executive roles at Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Louis, where she most recently has served as Vice President of Operations/Programs and Club Services. In this position, she was responsible for leading programs and operational strategy for the organization and was highly sought as a leader among the national Boys & Girls Clubs network. Notably, she began her professional career in 1999 with COCA in various operational, support, and external roles, rising to the position of Director of Community Services before joining Boys & Girls Clubs.

“On behalf of the entire COCA Board and Search Committee, I am thrilled to welcome Indigo back to the COCA family as we prepare for COCA’s next chapters in innovative arts education and programming in St. Louis and beyond,” said William Carson, President of COCA’s Board of Directors. “We look forward to the exciting and transformative work ahead to secure our future, and we are deeply grateful to the COCA leadership team, faculty, and staff, who maintained COCA’s artistic, financial, and operational excellence during this interim period.”

As President & CEO, Sams will be responsible for shaping COCA’s vision and establishing and implementing the organization’s strategic goals. She will work to expand COCA’s cultural and educational impact within and beyond the greater St. Louis area and advance COCA’s existing leadership position in the arts and culture sector on a local, national, and international stage. Sams will report to COCA’s Board of Directors and oversee COCA’s Senior Managing Director Alesha Henley, Senior Director of Development & Finance Jeremy Dewey, Senior Director of Arts Programming Orlando Graves Bolaños, and Director of Executive Administration Lucy Gossett.

“I am honored to have been selected to lead one of the top arts organizations in the nation. The arts have always been my passion, and this opportunity comes full circle for me,” said Sams. “I am excited to return home to start this next chapter of my career and am looking forward to all we will do together for our community.”

Sams earned a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Education – Public Administration from Harris Stowe State College and has completed numerous leadership growth programs, such as the *Business Management for Nonprofit Leaders* and the *Inside the CEO* programs facilitated by the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

COCA engaged in a national executive search process guided by [Arts Consulting Group \(ACG\)](https://www.acginc.com). ACG is a provider of hands-on interim management, executive search, revenue enhancement, strategic planning & community engagement, and facilities & program planning services for the arts and culture industry.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 50,000 students, audience members, artists, and families from more than 200 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of their work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and onsite at its campus in University City.