

Print Magazine

2019 Winner: American Student Dental Association

Entry Title: Contour Magazine

Project Overview

Contour is the American Student Dental Association's (ASDA) flagship magazine. In dentistry, the term "contour" refers to the process of shaping teeth. Contour's tagline, "Shaping the dental student experience," reflects the role of the magazine during our members' time in dental school. The publication's mission is to report on relevant industry trends, champion student rights and represent their formative experience to the wider dental community.

The magazine is published 10 times a year and is led, editorially, by our dental student member editorial board. The majority of our contributors, both writers and artists, are dental students. Contour was launched in January 2017 and averages 48 pages per issue. Each issue is themed to correlate with ASDA's primary initiatives and the member priorities throughout their educational cycle (e.g., wellness, advocacy, dental technology, practice management, and outreach). It covers topics relevant to dental students while they are in school and while they are preparing for careers as dentists, whether they pursue a specialty, private practice, corporate dentistry or academia. These topics include student debt, leadership, finances, marketing, research and technology, and more. Contour also spotlights dental students who have a unique background or story to tell. Additionally, the magazine covers ASDA's advocacy initiatives, featuring timely content on legislative issues that impact our members.

Goals/Objectives

1) Educate dental students in subjects not taught in dental school, such as managing their practice, advocacy, personal finance and leadership. In 2018, we restructured the magazine's departments to speak directly to this goal. Emphasis was placed on increasing the depth of coverage in the following departments: Expert Insights—only highly credentialed professionals write or are interviewed for this department; Advocacy—coverage of ASDA's stated positions and legislative priorities; News and Issues—newsworthy topics and/or issues that specifically affect dental students and their future; Management and Leadership—coverage of practice management topics and ideas for success within ASDA, as a dental professional and as a community leader; Career Compass—resources about post-grad options and opportunities; Science and Tech—coverage of scientific topics or the latest dental technologies; and Op-ed—a student's opinion on a particular hot topic. Every issue now contains these sections.

2) Build community among dental students by sharing common experiences and interests. Additional sections of the magazine focus on our community: Student Spotlight—showcases our membership's diversity through compelling personal stories; Wellness—professional and experiential advice on ASDA's five dimensions of wellness;

Travel and Leisure—sharing members' experiences traveling and participating in leisure activities (book reviews, cool hobbies, etc.); Chapter Focus—highlights chapter accomplishments or innovative member programming.

3) Provide an opportunity for dental students to contribute to a national publication and strengthen their written communication skills. Representatives of more than two-thirds of our 66 chapters wrote for Contour in 2018. In all, there were nearly 90 writers and contributors.

These goals directly support ASDA's mission to protect and advance the rights, interests and welfare of dental students.

Strategy/Tactics

The primary tactic to deliver the stated goals is successful engagement of the student-member editorial board. These volunteers are the linchpin to executing Contour, from editorial planning to author selection and support through the editing process. The editorial board is selected through an annual application-based competitive process. Generally, no more than one person serves more than a single year. The publications manager has to organize, energize, and train these volunteers effectively throughout the year.

Additionally, we select themes for each issue that speak directly to ASDA's mission and priorities. We eliminated technical and support (advertising) functions from the role of the editorial board, so they can focus on content and the development of these themes (not all articles focus on the theme, though). We also strive to include members on the covers, if possible, to increase engagement with print. Our September issue (included in this entry) featured a split run of the cover; both images were submitted by student members.

Contour also has a digital edition, which is currently a replica. This allows members to view our content online, and it also allows us to leverage this content in other ASDA publications and on social media to reinforce the notion that Contour is the linchpin benefit of ASDA membership.

Success Metrics/Results Achieved

The magazine has an average circulation of more than 23,000 people, primarily ASDA members. In addition to being distributed in print, a digital version is sent to a list of 3,000 subscribers. The email open rate for the digital issue announcement is 45 percent, on average. The online edition has an average monthly readership of nearly 1,200 users, with the reader spending an average of 12 minutes with each issue.

Association Website:

www.asdanet.org