Communication Standards for the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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Introduction

The importance of brand consistency

Maintaining a strong and recognizable brand is a key component to the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ success in student enrollment. We created this guide to make it easier for you to correctly and consistently represent the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) when you develop new communications.

At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the relationship between the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ brand and NIU’s overall brand. This guide focuses on strategy and expression through our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences lens, but is built upon, and should secondarily align with the institutional brand. So, while this is your primary reference tool, you should be aware of and, when in doubt, use the NIU institutional guidelines as a supporting resource. Those guidelines can be found at niu.edu/marcomm/standards.

How to use this guide

Brand Basics — This section highlights the basic components of our brand, including value proposition and brand personality.

Brand Voice — This section covers what the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences brand voice is, plus guidelines, an anchor statement and examples to help you put the brand voice into practice.

Visual Elements — This section provides concrete direction on how to use specific elements, such as logos, photography and typography.

Clearinghouse Review

Please submit all print and digital communications to the Clearinghouse Review at go.niu.edu/clearinghouse at least three days before the communication is due.
Brand Basics
The NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences value proposition is a brief aspirational statement that clearly describes the value we offer students and why they should choose us over other liberal arts and sciences schools. This statement is not intended to be used literally in communications. Instead, it is the prevailing thought behind every communication.

Value proposition:

**Fundamental inquiry for future generations to advance society.** We create an environment and experience that cultivates this through exploring ideas that better the world, and collective individuality — where each student develops as part of something bigger than themselves and each discipline enhances all others.
Fundamental inquiry for future generations.
The liberal arts and sciences are the bedrock of society, democracy and American higher education. Whether students pursue a career directly in the humanities, social sciences or natural sciences, or use these disciplines to enhance another field of study — what they learn here is fundamental to asking questions and solving problems that impact our society’s future on a global scale. This spirit of inquiry becomes more vital, not less, as we face critical challenges like diversifying our politics, balancing humanity with tech and AI, creating just and equitable societies, and preserving the environment through sustainable actions.

A world of inspiring ideas that better society.
At CLAS, diverse fields of study across departments and research centers combine with diverse backgrounds and perspectives among faculty and students — providing an experience of exploration. This is an environment where accomplished and engaging faculty encourage students not to fear challenging perspectives, sharing passions and expanding their own way of thinking. Making the experience personal, collaborative and immersive empowers them to further connect with, communicate and apply new knowledge in relevant and powerful ways, regardless of what they pursue in life.

Collective individuality.
Each of us develops more fully when we feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves — that’s the effect of collective individuality. This idea shapes our intense student focus and purposefully interconnected, smaller-school experience both in the classroom and the culture we create. It’s why we’re devoted to helping each student succeed in the face of their own challenges. It’s why we design hands-on programs around cutting-edge research. It’s how we help them become more adaptive learners, more equipped professionals and more mindful people. One, and all.
Brand Personality

Our brand personality shines through in everything we do

A brand’s personality represents the characteristics or traits people associate with a brand. For designers and writers, it helps determine “the look and feel,” or how the brand comes across at a personal and emotional level.

Being a college within NIU, the institution’s personality is a natural part of the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ brand personality. However, we build off that with two key traits that make our character as a college unique.

engaged

explorer

IN ADDITION TO THE UNIVERSITY’S PERSONALITY

personalized
Be who you are. Discover who you want to become.

inviting
Open up. Try new things.

charged
Come to take on the world. Leave ready to change it.
Brand Voice
How to put the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' brand voice into practice

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ brand voice reinforces our brand personality through the careful use of language. Below are the brand personality words along with how-tos. See page 11 for examples.

**Personalized**
- Personalize with student’s name whenever possible
- When applicable, include a real person’s quote or signature to convey personal, one-on-one communication
- Think of what the student wants or needs — what is the end benefit for them?

**Engaged**
- You’re talking to young, ambitious students — so write with spirit (e.g., Asking questions society has to ask. Planning to take on climate change. Just your typical day at CLAS.)
- When talking about students’ studies, speak to how a CLAS education will benefit them in their careers, regardless of what careers they choose
- Motivate your readers to take that next step, learn something new and achieve what they’ve always wanted

**Explorer**
- Look for ways to leverage the diversity and discovery of CLAS in all of your content
- Write headlines that spark the imagination (e.g., A world of ideas awaits you. Come ready to explore.)
- The phrase “Stay curious.” embodies the spirit of inquiry CLAS and its students have; use this phrase often and in many different ways (e.g., as a headline or sign-off)

**Inviting**
- Look for opportunities to convey inclusiveness
- Use encouraging, aspirational ideas and phrases
- Write from a place of warmth and empathy
- Talk to the student, not at them
Vision Statement

This is a description of what the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences stands for and aspires to always be, and it’s an example of our big picture voice. There will be additional examples on the pages that follow, which highlight more sides and shades of the voice. Think of this as an “About us” message.

We know the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences remain essential to the advancement of society. This will continue pushing our community to create an environment and experience where students engaged in the most diverse fields of study can learn to ask questions, solve problems and share ideas that make a positive impact on the world.

To make this possible, we create a community of:

• Explorers who continuously seek out and share new perspectives, valuable information and meaningful solutions
• Scholars working at the cutting-edge and appearing in publications of the highest reputation
• Teachers routinely given the highest commendation by learners and peers

• Staff that provides the highest level of service
• Students eagerly sought by industry, graduate schools and public institutions because they know, they make, they do, perform, speak and write with authority, clarity and purpose
How to combine brand personality with brand narrative

Below are examples that demonstrate the flexibility of the brand personality through voice.

Ask questions. Share ideas. Create solutions.

Stay curious.

Explorers wanted.

What’s next is up to you.

Diversity creates difference makers.

A world of ideas awaits you.

Come ready to explore.

Dream big. Dig deep. Discover more.

Wherever you go, your education will too.

Leave your mark on the world.


A place to think big.
A place to find your voice.
A place to unleash your potential.
Stay curious.

Big challenges require big thinkers.

Change starts here. Stay curious.

Diversifying politics?
Preserving the environment?
Inspiring the next generation?
We’re always up for a good challenge.
Are you?

Asking questions society has to ask.
Planning to take on climate change.
Just your typical day at CLAS.
Visual Elements
As a sub-brand of NIU, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences derives its core brand assets from the institutional identity, including color, imagery, pattern and type. All College of Liberal Arts and Sciences communications should feel as if they are part of the larger institutional identity system.

The following pages outline visual elements specific to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more details on the use of NIU institutional brand assets, please review the communication standards for institutional identity at [niu.edu/marcomm/standards](http://niu.edu/marcomm/standards).
The NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences logo is central to its branding. It serves to identify communications with a “signature” of the college. Consistent and correct use of this logo significantly contributes to maintaining and strengthening the identity and reputation of the college and NIU. Generally, the logo appears at or near the bottom of the page and, occasionally, elsewhere. The logo should not be used as nor incorporated into a heading within a message.

The NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences logo is composed of two parts: the **NIU brandmark** and the **sub-branded wordmark**. These parts combine to make a logo that identifies the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to the world. **Never use the brandmark alone to represent the university except in specific cases, which must be approved in advance by University Marketing.**

The NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences logo with the university tagline. It’s an opportunity to say something bold about ourselves that differentiates us from other universities.
Imagery is one of our strongest opportunities for creating an emotional connection. It provides a platform to engage with our audience and is a joint reflection of the University and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ personality traits:

- Personalized
- Engaged
- Inviting
- Explorer
- Charged

**Image library**
From buildings and landscapes to students and faculty, you can access a variety of photos from the Image Library at niu.canto.com. If you cannot locate a suitable image in the library, you can request assistance in locating an image or schedule a photographer. For help with the Image Library, contact socialmedia@niu.edu.

**Original photography**
When original photography is needed, we recommend using the professional photographers in Institutional Communications. Their expertise in lighting and composition is essential for creating dynamic and engaging photos. Discussing the project ahead of time with the creative team can help focus the direction of the photography. For photo assignments, contact socialmedia@niu.edu.
Selecting imagery
Always select photos that reinforce the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ brand personality. Imagery should convey student engagement that is authentic and creates an emotional connection with our audience. Look for photos that are warm and full of spirit and energy. Only select photos that have adequate image resolution.

Do not use color overlays over portraits. Faces must always be displayed in full color.
In addition to the University-level brand elements, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also has its own proprietary set of visual elements. These elements have been designed to reflect the value proposition and personality of the college and should only be used in communications expressly designed for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The NIU logo is the inspiration and source of our unique visual elements, which we refer to as the “journey arrows.” These visual elements represent a link between the core NIU brand and the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Visually, they serve to depict the connection between the classroom and the real world.
Journey arrows

- Journey arrows may be used as directional devices, image containers or to highlight key visuals and content
- Arrows may be scaled but must always match the proportion of its original construction
- Arrows may only be positioned pointing up or to the right (moving forward)
Two additional visual treatments can also be used as supportive design elements:

1. **Graphic textures**
   Graphic textures add visual interest and bring forward the unique skills and perspectives within each department. Look for visuals that are representative of the various departments.

2. **All-caps, bold type treatments**
   College of Liberal Arts and Sciences students are young, ambitious and spirited. They are today’s groundbreakers and tomorrow’s leaders. Bold type styling reflects that energy and drive while evoking action. **Do not use all-caps in body text** since it’s difficult to read in large amounts of content.
The pictured pieces demonstrate some of the ways that the NIU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ voice and visuals can be combined to create compelling brand communications.

Wherever you go, your education will too.
While you’re diving into subject and technical knowledge in your major, you’ll also be building skills that are valuable and sought after by all employers:
• Writing and oral communication
• Critical thinking
• Quantitative skills
• Presentation skills
• Cultural competency
• Experience in working collaboratively

Learn it. Speak it. Achieve it.
Picking up a second language will open many doors in both your career and life. On the business side, it will increase your value and marketability. On the life side, it will make you a more well-rounded person. Wherever you are in your language-learning journey today, we have the resources to get you where you want to be in the future.

Career success starts here.
Jumping into clubs and programs that prepare you for the next chapter of life are much more valuable than stats on your resume. They will help you build leadership skills and a network of people who could assist you throughout your career journey.

Beyond the classroom.
Diversity and inclusion.
Fostering diversity and building a broad cultural competency is at the heart of liberal arts learning. We’re committed to providing an environment that promotes an inclusive environment and fuels a spirit of inquiry that’s at the core of our mission:
• Student research.
• General Education courses
• Interdisciplinary programs in Environmental Studies, Nonprofit and NGO Studies, Latino and Latin American Studies, Southeast Asian Studies and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Have several interests? So do we. There are many opportunities for you to pursue your interests and develop into a well-rounded and contributing university citizen. As you explore, our advisors will guide you and help you stay on track while you fulfill your degree requirements.

The ultimate reward for earning a college degree is gaining a versatile skill set for career success. That’s exactly what we’ll help you do at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

A world of ideas awaits you. Whether you have your future all figured out or you’re exploring all your possibilities, you’ll gain the skills you’ll need to earn a degree and prepare for what’s next.
• General Education courses
• 34 undergraduate degree programs spanning the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences
• Interdisciplinary programs in Environmental Studies, Nonprofit and NGO Studies, Latino and Latin American Studies, Southeast Asian Studies and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies.
• Secondary education licensure programs in the sciences, English, foreign language, math, history and social sciences.

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The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the largest and most diverse college at NIU. Our focus includes the applied and natural sciences as well as the social sciences and humanities.
While you’ll be diving into subject and technical knowledge in your major, you’ll also be building skills that are valuable and sought after by all employers:
• Writing and oral communication
• Critical thinking
• Quantitative skills
• Presentation skills
• Cultural competency
• Experience in working collaboratively

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