

# Communication Standards for the NIU College of Business



Northern Illinois  
University

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# Introduction

## The importance of brand consistency

Maintaining a strong and recognizable brand is a key component to NIU College of Business's success in student enrollment. We created this guide to make it easier for you to correctly and consistently represent the College of Business when you develop new communications.

At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the relationship between the College of Business brand and NIU's overall brand. This guide focuses on strategy and expression through our College of Business 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](https://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 Business 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](https://go.niu.edu/clearinghouse) at least three days before the communication is due.

# Brand Basics

# Value Proposition

The NIU College of Business value proposition is a brief aspirational statement that clearly describes the value we offer students and why they should choose us over other business schools. This statement is not intended to be used literally in communications. Instead, it is the prevailing thought behind every communication.

## **Value proposition:**

Extreme engagement from day one, continuous exposure to today's challenges and opportunities, and an understanding of how business can make the world better.

# 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 Business's brand personality. However, we build off that with two key traits that make our character as a college unique.

## real-world ready

**You're in this. Think, feel and achieve like the professional you are.**

## community-changing

**Make a successful life possible. Show it can be done in a way that makes a difference.**

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IN ADDITION TO THE UNIVERSITY'S PERSONALITY

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## 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

# Brand Voice

## How to put the NIU College of Business brand voice into practice

The College of Business's brand voice reinforces our brand personality through the careful use of language. Below are the brand personality words along with how-tos. See [page 10](#) for examples.

### Real-world-ready

- Be straightforward and plain-spoken
- Don't be afraid to have a lively, unexpected "can do it", "will do it" punch
- Use words that convey an immersive, "in it" style of learning
- Frame things in a way that is professional and relevant to the business world
- The goal is to convey that this isn't just school, it's life; it's adaptable; it's down-to-earth

### 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?

### Community-changing

- Talk about the why behind the pursuit
- Use words that are positive and optimistic
- Describe the intuitiveness and interconnectedness of the college and the experience
- Frame the bigger meaning, beyond career impact, to cultural/community impact
- Describe and depict the innovative design of our programming, in and beyond the classroom

### 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

### Charged

- Choose words that are encouraging and energetic
- When appropriate, use short bursts of encouraging phrases (e.g., let's do this, we're going places, no-limit learning)
- Write content that is bold and action-oriented
- Portray and speak to NIU Business students as being ready for what's to come, not just challenges that exist today

## **Anchor Statement**

This is a description of what the College of Business 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.

NIU College of Business empowers future leaders and citizens to make a positive difference in a fast-changing global and entrepreneurial economy. Our students are ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work. We're here to inspire and encourage them to bring their best every day, transforming them one by one into game-changing, principled professionals of tomorrow.

## How to combine brand personality with brand narrative

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

There are good reasons why talent-seekers often begin by looking at NIU College of Business.

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Making money matters. But so does earning it in a way you can be proud of.

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*Be who you are. Discover who you want to be.* What piques your interest and inspires you to keep digging? Is it data analysis? Reaching a target audience via social? Honing your entrepreneurial instincts? Here, you'll learn what your strengths are, how to build on them and, ultimately, how to market them so you can find a meaningful career that's the perfect fit for you.

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As the world changes, business changes. Be the change you want to see.

*Out-of-the-classroom learning that matters to the outside world.* From Abbott and Caterpillar to McDonalds and Walmart, corporations based in or near Chicago come to NIU College of Business to recruit hardworking, smart and creative talent who can hit the ground running. They're on to something. Because we emphasize *doing* over simply *being* in a classroom, our business majors arrive on the job ready to contribute and make a difference in the world.

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Get down to business close to home. But not too close.

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Your big ideas. Seen, heard and done. Right here.

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We'll help you find ways to turn your passions into possibilities.

# Visual Elements

# Core visual elements

As a sub-brand of NIU, the College of Business derives its core brand assets from the Institutional identity, including color, imagery, pattern and type. All College of Business communications should feel as if they are part of the larger institutional identity system.

The following pages outline visual elements specific to NIU College of Business. 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 College of Business logo

The NIU College of Business 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 or incorporated into a heading within a message.

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



## Logo with tagline

The NIU College of Business logo is also available with the university tagline. It’s an opportunity to say something bold about ourselves that differentiates us from other universities. **Do not use "carrer path" visual elements to house the logo with tagline.**



# Photography

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 Business's personality traits:

- **Real-world ready**
- **Community-changing**
- **Personalized**
- **Inviting**
- **Charged**

## **Image library**

From buildings and landscapes to students and faculty, you can access a variety of photos from the Image Library at [images.media.niu.edu](https://images.media.niu.edu). 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](mailto: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](mailto:socialmedia@niu.edu).



### Selecting imagery

Always select photos that reinforce NIU College of Business's 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.**



Interesting perspective with bright, natural lighting



Energetic with good use of selective focus



Genuine, authentic emotions



Personal and engaging



Rich, saturated color



Inviting, warm personality

# Unique visual elements

In addition to the University level brand elements, the College of Business 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 Business.**

The NIU logo is the inspiration and source of our unique visual elements, which we refer to as the "career path." These visual elements represent a link between the core NIU brand and NIU College of Business. Visually, they serve to depict the connection between the classroom and the real world. These elements can be depicted in a number of different ways, which are illustrated on the following pages.

When using these devices, **always maintain the angles of the original logo.** The career path should also have a forward movement, **always pointing to the right and never to the left.**



"Career path" construction process

The strongest use of the "career path" is as an anchor for the NIU College of Business logo. There are three important rules to follow while using this device:

1. The layout should have a white border that serves as a frame for the piece (not an image bleed). This framed area, should be no smaller than .25" (18pt) on printed materials.
2. The career path should cleanly intersect the NIU logo while allowing for even and adequate space around the type.
3. A 2pt overlap of the path into the white frame area should be used to make the path more pronounced.



In addition to housing the NIU College of Business logo, the career path can also be used for layout purposes in the following ways:

**Example A**

As a graphic device to shape a layout, drawing attention to key messaging or facts. This should always be done purposefully and at interesting intervals within a larger communication piece.

**Example B**

To draw attention to meta information or to place focus on a call to action. This use should be subtle and care should be taken to ensure that it does not become overused or distracting.

**Management**

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**Michael 19**  
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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86% of students accepted a job within 3 months of graduation.

\$35K in scholarships to marketing majors

We'll help find ways to turn your passion into possibilities.

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# Example applications

The pictured pieces demonstrate some of the ways that the NIU College of Business's voice and visuals can be combined to create compelling brand communications.

**Success Driven. Business Casual.**

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
College of Business

**86%**  
of students accepted a job within 3 months of graduation

**100**  
business execs are guest lecturers each semester

**15:1**  
Students to faculty

**Choose NIU College of Business. All the edge. None of the sharp elbows.**

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**Mike '16**  
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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**Get to Work. Get Down to Business.**

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
College of Business

Come out and meet your future teachers and mentors. Our faculty has the know-how and the experience to guide you on your way to achieving and exceeding your goals.

GROUP EVENTS

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INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

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VISIT US For a schedule of upcoming events and opportunities, visit [cob.niu.edu](http://cob.niu.edu)



# Northern Illinois University

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