Communication Standards for the NIU College of Education
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Introduction

The importance of brand consistency

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

At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the relationship between the College of Education brand and NIU’s overall brand. This guide focuses on strategy and expression through our College of Education 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 Education 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 Education value proposition is a brief aspirational statement that clearly describes the value we offer students and why they should choose us over other schools of education. This statement is not intended to be used literally in communications. Instead, it is the prevailing thought behind every communication.

**Value proposition:**

Through dynamic instruction, research participation and programs grounded in engaged learning experiences, we prepare students to succeed and lead in their careers and communities.
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 Education’s brand personality. However, we build off that with two key traits that make our character as a college unique.

thoughtful


eye-opening

Education happens in finding answers, not being given them. In-the-moment. Immersive. Interactive. Stimulating.

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
Brand Voice

How to put the NIU College of Education brand voice into practice

The College of Education’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.

**Thoughtful**
- Be empathetic: frame the experience from their POV, use language that resonates with students
- Convey the bigger picture and deeper meaning of their journey
- Share their focus on the future, but show where there can be flexibility along the way
- Demonstrate the expertise and relevance of (and for) faculty

**Eye-opening**
- Connect dots in ways students may not see
- Point out the importance of co-curricular opportunities, seeing education beyond coursework
- Use bright, positive language, and highlight possibility
- Be open and transparent, make things real, bring in real voices, feature real success/impact stories

**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?

**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 College of Education students as being ready for what’s to come, not just challenges that exist today
Vision Statement

This is a description of what the College of Education 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 embrace and address the changing educational and professional needs of all students and provide an inclusive, equitable, engaging and supportive environment that inspires students, faculty and staff to strive for excellence. As leaders and trendsetters in our disciplines, we contribute to the advancement of teaching, learning and practice in our program areas locally and globally.
How to combine brand personality with brand narrative

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

The greatest lessons are those you live.

*I never thought I would be here. I have a learning disability I’ve had since I was young. But I’ve adapted, and I think it gives me my own way of looking at things. It may not be easy, but easy is not what I want.*

*I feel the College of Education, overall, is like a guide. The kind that focuses on helping you along the process as much as on the results.*

If you think you can, dig in. Come visit. Get on campus, and put yourself here.

*I chose NIU for my Master’s because it was the only school in the Midwest that had the modules that I was looking for. Quantitative research methods. Qualitative research methods. Both integrated with instructional technology. A lot of programs tend to focus on one aspect more than the other. NIU allows you to master it all.*

— Grad student, Educational Research and Assessment

Culture impacts learning. Your career could impact how.

*My program advisor actually invited me to come to a workshop day with other students. They do an hour workshop in different aspects of what they teach. I felt really lucky to get to do that.*

Live to learn. For life.
Visual Elements
As a sub-brand of NIU, the College of Education derives its core brand assets from the Institutional identity, including color, imagery, pattern and type. All College of Education 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 Education. For more details on the use of NIU institutional brand assets, please review the communication standards for institutional identity at niu.edu/marcomm/standards.
The NIU College of Education 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 Education 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 Education 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.

Logo with tagline
The NIU College of Education logo is also available 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 Education’s personality traits:

- Thoughtful
- Illuminating/eye-opening
- 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. 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 NIU College of Education’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.
Unique Visual Elements

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

The NIU logo is the inspiration and source of our unique visual elements, which we refer to as the “building blocks.” These visual elements represent a link between the core NIU brand and NIU College of Education. 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. The building blocks can be scaled and rearranged but must always remain proportional to their original construction.
The strongest uses of the building blocks is as a layout organization and hierarchy element, image container, and pattern. There are three important rules to follow while using this device:

1. Single building blocks can overlay photography to emphasize content.
2. The building blocks can scale in size but must always remain proportional to their original construction.
3. When the building blocks element is used as background pattern, text may be reversed out of a solid PMS 186 red text box to ensure legibility.
In addition to housing the NIU College of Education 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**
As an container for key imagery that complements the content of the piece.

**Example C**
As a background pattern to emphasize information or to place focus on a call to action. This use should be subtle and care should be taken to ensure maximum legibility of the text.
Example Applications

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

Great lessons are those you live.

Making your own future is worth the challenge.

Sometimes you’re not finding your career.
You’re transforming it.

What do an elementary school teacher and a sports management professional have in common? Dedication.

Welcome to NIU College of Education. Ucia sandus sim vel im facerup
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My best,
Laurie Elish-Piper, Ph.D.
Dean, NIU College of Education