

Communication Standards for the NIU College of Visual and Performing Arts



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 Visual and Performing Arts' success in student enrollment. We created this guide to make it easier for you to correctly and consistently represent the College of Visual and Performing Arts when you develop new communications.

At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the relationship between the College of Visual and Performing Arts' brand and NIU's overall brand. This guide focuses on strategy and expression through our College of Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts 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

Value Proposition

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

Value proposition:

Artistry applied to academia, enabling a mastery of the whole work, training students to approach their masterpiece piece by piece, and helping them to connect through craft from concept to career.

Value Proposition

These are the three concepts within our value proposition supported with messaging that further brings each to life. This support messaging is crafted to be modular and can be used as or to inform outgoing communications.

Master the whole work— performance and practice.

It's our contention that if you want your art to be vibrant, immersive and professional, it's vital your learning experience and environment be, too. You must focus on both performance and practice. This is what our music, theater and dance, and art and design schools are built around. You will not just reach your highest level of skill and creativity in whichever endeavor you choose. You'll develop ways to put intention into your creativity, and to commercialize without compromising the value of what you do.

Approach the masterpiece piece by piece.

All artistry works from the inside out. It is a process of building and developing one layer at a time. This is why it isn't magic when you see a massive group of musicians from around the world, who are meeting for the first time, improvise and harmonize together. There are universal fundamentals they are working from. It also isn't easy. But our accomplished faculty are masters at giving you the foundation, the discipline and the skills you need, regardless of your art, to create, collaborate, grow and achieve.

Connect through craft across continua.

In every school at NIU's College of Visual and Performing Arts, we're strengthening students' abilities across three critical continua. The creative continuum — developing an idea from rehearsal to show, recital to concert, concept to artwork. The entrepreneurial continuum — giving students the agency to go from creative potential to career potential. And the impact continuum — deepening the value of art from personal betterment to community betterment. This is how we create artists who don't just inspire, but actively engage and transform the world.

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 Visual and Performing Arts' brand personality. However, we build off that with two key traits that make our character as a college unique.

creative

**If you're going to inspire, do it to transform
(yourself and your audience).**

practical

Make every note, every beat, every angle count.

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 Visual and Performing Arts' brand voice into practice

The College of Visual and Performing Arts' 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.

Creative

- Look for opportunities to spin buzzwords and common phrases in the arts
- Aim to make your content engaging, thought-provoking and diligent
- Write headlines the same way artists create; i.e., use various styles and methods
- Think of your words and the visual as one—is the connection between them as strong as it can be?

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?

Practical

- Use results- and success-focused language and messages to inspire the reader
- Emphasize our commitment to application—and not just the learning—of artistic theories
- When talking about the learning environment of our schools, always relate the conversation back to the future benefit of the student

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 Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts 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 exist to ever improve how we bring art to audiences and audiences to art. How we welcome all perspectives into the arts, and foster arts for all. How we reach across disciplines to create and cultivate community while transforming the community around us. And how we realize art in its practical forms—the people, places and things that make our lives more livable.

To make this possible, we create a community of:

- Artists who are a presence at the highest level nationally and internationally
- 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.

No matter your pursuit, there are no shortcuts.

Art is about putting in the work.

Crafting the college experience.

“The notes are the result of what makes you an artist.”

“Transformation demands inspiration.”

Every brushstroke moves you forward.
(Even the one that sets you back.)

The business of creativity.

I teach what art teaches me.

Academia, through the artist’s eye.

Art transforms the artist (and the audience).

Changing culture through composition.

Been there. Doing this.

I am the CVPA.

Art builds economy.

Art builds community.

Visual Elements

Core Visual Elements

As a sub-brand of NIU, the College of Visual and Performing Arts derives its core brand assets from the institutional identity, including color, imagery, pattern and type. All College of Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts. 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 College of Visual and Performing Arts Logo

The NIU College of Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts logo is also available with the university tagline. It's an opportunity to say something bold about ourselves that differentiates us from other universities.



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 Visual and Performing Arts' personality traits:

- **Creative**
- **Personalized**
- **Practical**
- **Inviting**
- **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 NIU College of Visual and Performing Arts' 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



Personal and engaging



Genuine, authentic emotions



Rich, saturated color



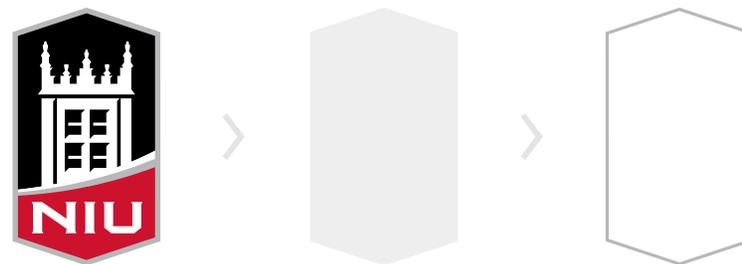
Inviting, warm personality

Unique Visual Elements

In addition to the University-level brand elements, the College of Visual and Performing Arts 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 Visual and Performing Arts.**

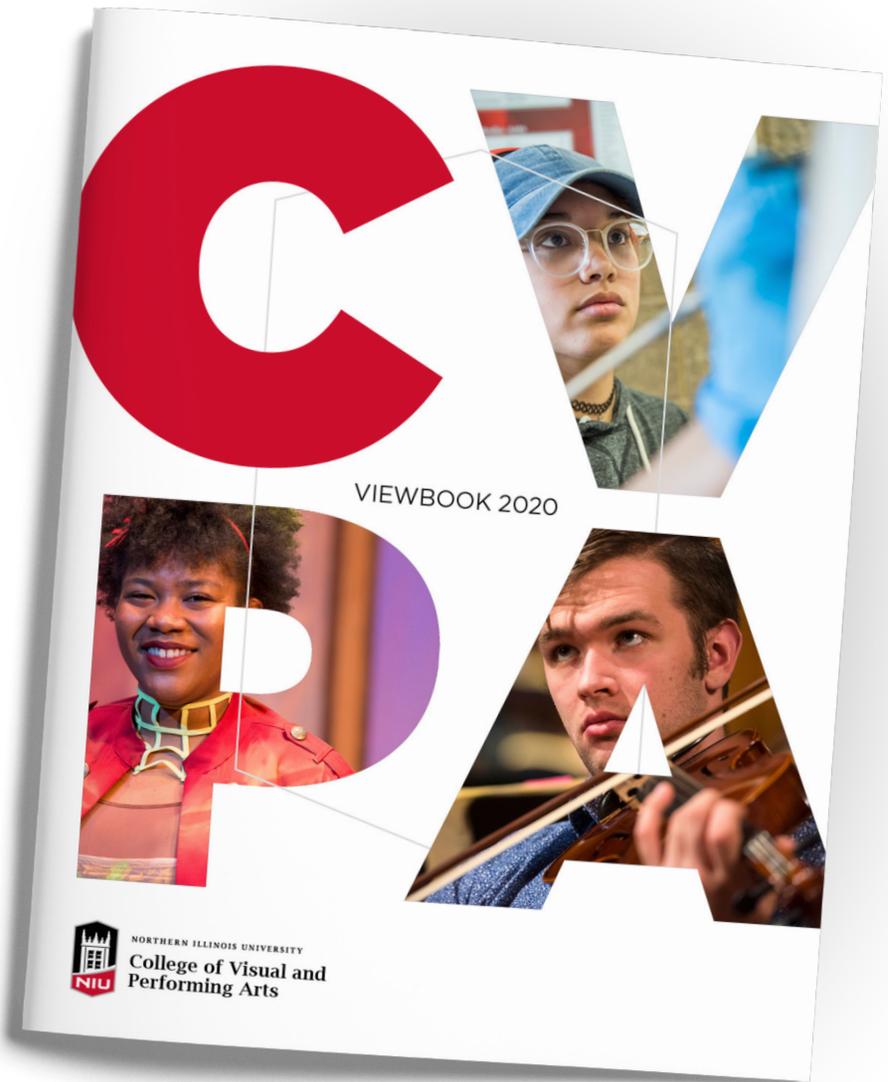
The NIU logo is the inspiration and source of our unique visual elements, which we refer to as the “frames.” These visual elements represent a link between the core NIU brand and NIU College of Visual and Performing Arts. Visually, they serve to depict the connection between the classroom and the real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

The frames can be scaled and rearranged but must always remain in the same orientation and proportional to its original construction.



The strongest uses of the frames is as a layout organization and hierarchy element or a device to connect ideas. There are three important rules to follow while using this device:

1. Frames can overlap photography and typography to emphasize content.
2. The frames can scale in size but must always remain proportional to their original construction.
3. When the frames are used as a connecting device, they can weave through elements to create depth and a deeper sense of association.



Example Applications

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

SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN



Specialize further in a particular area of fine arts study, design and media, art and design education, or art history.

Here you'll find a comprehensive, immersive graduate program that will let you focus just about anywhere.

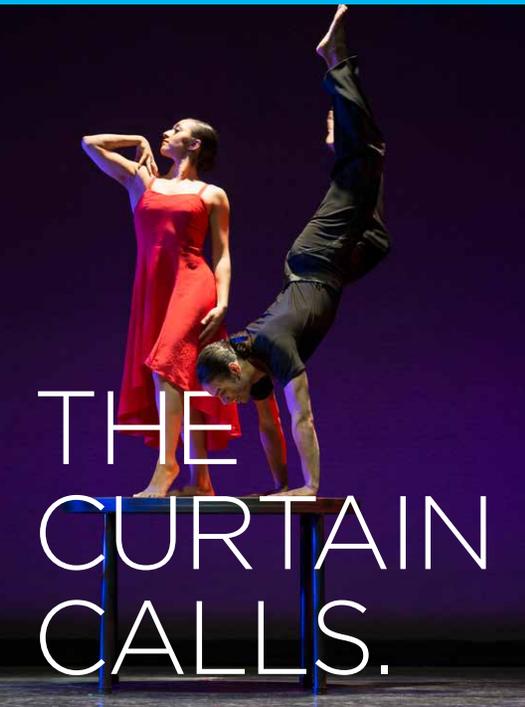
TOP 20
printmaking program in the nation and top 125 overall fine arts program. —U.S. News and World Report

"WE TEACH HOW TO BE CRITICAL, CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE."



JESSICA LABATTE, M.F.A.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Jessica Labatte's approach to both her own artistic work and style of teaching in our School of Art and Design blends the philosophical with the technical. Her photographic images explore concepts of autonomy, agency, and chance in contemporary material culture and photographic space. This not only gives her students a broadened perspective, it gives them a sense of what's possible as they embark on their own personal exploration of photography. Labatte's work has been featured in numerous publications and exhibitions, and has also earned her copious awards, grants and residencies throughout her career.



THE CURTAIN CALLS.

SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DANCE

EVERY CHARACTER BUILDS CHARACTER.

The instruction you get in class gives you knowledge of the past, the purpose of different techniques and a rich worldview. But the real training happens in action. So, we stage a full season of seven Mainstage Series and six Studio Series productions on three stages, providing public performance opportunities every year you're here. The production choices we make are designed to challenge both students and audiences. And, as part of an internationally-recognized program, each year a select group of students studies for one month at the famed Moscow Art Theatre School.

To any theatre or dance student looking for a training ground that's rigorous and realistic, designed for personal artistic development, and built to broaden your skills and attitudes so you can be the best—we say welcome to the School of Theatre and Dance.

Our principles are simple. Students perform publicly all four years of the program. Our students have a strong work ethic and commitment to excellence, but also the ability to work as an ensemble and treat other artists with respect—this is not only fostered but required. We emphasize collaboration, not competition.

Our faculty are more than great teachers. They're also accomplished artists. In addition to the skill and wisdom they pass on, they bring a connectivity among the entertainment industry that can translate into a real advantage for students.



Northern Illinois University

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