



The Higher Ed Digital Branding Guide

18-point checklist to bring your brand to
life on the web

CARNEGIE

Are you ready to bring your digital brand to life on the web?

**Prepare your institution for
high quality, resonant brand
experiences.**

- + Visual Identity
- + Brand Storytelling
- + Marketing Strategy

Visual Identity

Your institution's visual identity comprises its logo, imagery, typography, colors, and creative design.



✓ Topographic Utility

Choose readable, screen-optimize typefaces for your brand. Consider paid vs. open source options like Google fonts.

Visual Identity



✓ Photography & Illustration

Build a photo library that represents your campus environment, student life, and academic programs.

Include lots of portraiture. Be mindful of inclusive representation.

Visual Identity



✓ User Interface Patterns

Sticking to familiar user interface patterns will make your site *more* usable for *more* people.

Focus your creativity on content, not the UI.

Visual Identity



✓ Color Accessibility

Limit your colors to a core palette of primary and secondary hues. Check contrast combinations at [webaim.org](https://www.webaim.org). Consider background alternatives to white, grey, and black.

Visual Identity



✓ Motion & Choreography

Communicate the personality of your brand with movement. How elements load on a webpage or respond to user actions can alter or enhance the perception of your brand.

Visual Identity



✓ Scalable Logos & Brand Marks

If your logo is more than a few years old, chances are it's not optimized for digital applications.

Develop a small-sized version for mobile headers and digital advertising. Scalable vector files are a must.

Visual Identity



Brand Storytelling

Your institution should be using a narrative to connect its brand to its students, with a focus on its values, mission, and benefit to students.



✓ Know Your Story

A brand story is made up of all that you are and all that you do. From the intuition's history, mission, inspiration, goals, audience, and reason for being, it's why you exist.

Brand Storytelling



✓ Tell Your Story

Use a narrative to connect your brand to your audiences. Focus on linking what you stand for to the values that you share with your audience.

Brand Storytelling



✓ Deliver the Visuals

Great storytelling is determined by form, not format. The right medium is the one that best supports your brand narrative: could you tell your story through video, audio, photography, or design?

Brand Storytelling



✓ Know Your Audiences

The audience is the hero of your brand story. Lead with audience needs and let the brand trail behind. Your content should first serve your audience with value.

Brand Storytelling



✓ Define the Moral of Your Story

Your story should always have an actionable takeaway. Remember that the story's goal isn't always to compel someone to enroll—at least not yet. But what other actions do you want the reader to take?

Brand Storytelling



✓ Connect Emotionally

Audiences want more than transactions – they want relationships. To successfully engage them emotionally, you must first understand their key emotional motivators. Identify those which are most important for your audience.

Brand Storytelling



Marketing Strategy

Your institution's brand marketing strategy should include a long-term plan whose purpose is to increase the institution's position and positive perception in the higher ed market.



✓ Build Trust

Don't just sell your institution, provide value. If you give your audience ideas, advice, and motivation, then they are more likely to trust you. Put out relevant content to create brand visibility.

Marketing Strategy



✓ Track Engagement

Engagement boils down to how much your audience interacts with your brand and how often. High engagement rates will indicate audience health, interesting content types, and awareness of your brand.

Marketing Strategy



✓ Set Goals

Setting focused, realistic, and quantifiable goals upfront establishes a true north for your marketing efforts. This demonstrates the strategic importance of what the team is working on and empowers you to show leadership.

Marketing Strategy



✓ Consistency is Key

Bring a specific feeling to your audiences through messaging that remains the same across all of your channels and assets, while also keeping up a reliable stream of content.

Marketing Strategy



✓ Personalize

Segment your audiences and target them with better-personalized marketing. The more detailed feedback and nuanced segments, the better.

Marketing Strategy



✓ Be Authentic

Shift from advertising to inbound, brand-centric to audience-centric. Students are more aware, have access to more information, and are becoming more sophisticated in the experience they want from institutions they choose to interact with.

Marketing Strategy





Thank You