



Minnesota State
Community and Technical College

BRANDING AND IDENTITY GUIDELINES

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BRAND AND IDENTITY

A brand is more than just a look. A brand is a distinct professional identity that has the power to convey an organization's longevity and legitimacy. Individuals who interact with M State's brand should feel a genuine connection to the college, and every student, parent, alumnus or community member should have an opportunity to engage in a positive way.

We are all responsible for communicating the M State brand in a dependable manner that upholds the school's mission, vision and values.

HISTORY OF THE M STATE BRAND

Minnesota State Community and Technical College was founded in 2003 with the merger of Fergus Falls Community College and Northwest Technical College campuses in Detroit Lakes, Moorhead and Wadena.

For the first several years, the college was widely recognized as MSCTC. In 2008, the college adopted a new moniker, M State, in an effort to simplify and strengthen the college's brand.

In 2013, the college adopted an academic mark, the circular M State Symbol of a wavelike "M," which became part of the college's logo in 2014. The symbol was added to strengthen the visual recognition of the M State brand. M State strives to provide a consistent set of standards to help guide how the college engages with students and communities.

MISSION

Minnesota State Community and Technical College specializes in affordable and exceptional education, service, and workforce training. We welcome all students and engage them in shaping their futures and their communities.

VISION

A success story for every student.

VALUES

Integrity

As dedicated professionals, we act with purpose in everything we do. We are sincere and honest in our relationships and communications and hold ourselves accountable for doing the right thing even when no one is watching.

Inclusion

We welcome, respect, and accept people for who they are and celebrate the power of our collective differences in creating and shaping more robust, energized communities.

Innovation

Through the power of our four campuses, strategic partnerships and creative problem-solving, we enhance communities. We incorporate technology to improve the student experience, and we see continuous improvement as a constant.

USE OF THIS GUIDE

It is standard practice for organizations to create and maintain brand guidelines to help ensure consistency and clarity in how the brand is presented across all platforms and communications. M State employees should reference this guide when creating any written, visual, digital or multimedia materials intended for external/public audiences for or on behalf of M State.

Any external marketing and/or product vendors that embark on a collaborative project with M State must review this guide to become familiar with the college’s branding standards.

M State’s legal name, moniker and logos are important components of the college brand and must be used appropriately and consistently.

Most design considerations are addressed in this guide, which is a working document and will be updated as necessary.

All of M State’s branding components are proprietary. Use of any logos, designs or other branding components is an acknowledgment of your acceptance of the guidelines herein.

Should you have a question that isn’t addressed in this guide, email karen.reilly@minnesota.edu.

The most up-to-date version of the guide is posted at minnesota.edu/communications.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCES

M State logos, symbols, media release forms, a PowerPoint presentation template and other marketing materials available for use by M State employees can be found on the [MSCTC-Communications and Marketing SharePoint](#) website.

Request of official M State letterhead, envelopes, note cards, press releases, business cards, name badges and more can be made through the Employee Portal by clicking on “Resources,” “Communications and Marketing Tasklist.” The Project Request form on this page is also where you can make any special or general marketing requests, including a request for a marketing campaign, media event, new M State webpage, or changes to an existing webpage that go beyond the scope of a content manager. Keep in mind, the average turnaround time for small to medium marketing projects is 10 business days (from the date of all needed content/materials getting submitted to the department); larger projects can take two to four weeks or longer to complete.

Requests for social media posts are fulfilled in a timely manner. To request a social media post, fill out the M State College Social Media post request form, available by adding the Sm: Social Media Form portlet to your main Employee Portal page.

Contact the Communications and Marketing Department at karen.reilly@minnesota.edu with questions or to submit ideas for M State-branded media, products, merchandise and other items.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND STUDENT GROUPS

M State has a diverse range of clubs and organizations. Other than Spartan Athletics, there is no official logo for any such organization

Student groups may use M State logos and other branding components provided they follow the guidelines in this manual (for example, logos require a certain amount of clear space around them and cannot be altered in any way). Individual students are not permitted to use such components.

Unofficial logos may be designed for student clubs or organizations for use on promotional materials such as clothing, banners or posters. In these cases, the college name “M State” should be used, but the official logo, moniker and College/Presidential Seals are not to be used. You must register your group’s unofficial logo with the Communications and Marketing Department, in high resolution .jpg or .eps format.

Use of the M State brand on commercial goods and specialty items such as t-shirts, hats and bumper stickers is permitted for student groups with approval from Communications and Marketing. Submit requests for approval to karen.reilly@minnesota.edu.

GUIDELINES FOR ALUMNI AND ALUMNI GROUPS

Alumni groups may use M State branding with the approval of the Communications and Marketing Department and upon recommendation by the Alumni Foundation. Individual alumni are not allowed to use M State branding components.

SIGNATURE LOGO

The M State Signature Logo is the official logo of M State. It consists of two elements:

- ▶ The M State Symbol, which is the circular graphic of a wavelike “M”
- ▶ The M State Signature, which includes the text, “Minnesota State Community and Technical College”

The M State Signature Logo is available in two styles — vertical and horizontal, as shown on the right — and in a few different color options, as shown on the next page. It must be used clearly and as designed; never altered in any way.



▲
Vertical Format



▲
Horizontal Format

Vertical Format

Horizontal Format



◀ **FULL COLOR LOGO**
should be used whenever possible. Use of this logo reinforces M State branding/identity.



◀ **BLUE SINGLE COLOR LOGO**
is acceptable when only one color choice is available.



◀ **BLACK SINGLE COLOR LOGO**
is acceptable when the logo is being used in black and white media.



◀ **WHITE SINGLE COLOR LOGO**
is also acceptable when the logo is being used in black and white media.

CLEAR SPACE

To ensure visual impact and clarity, clear space (also known as white space) must always surround an M State logo. Other graphic elements or text should never intrude upon the logo

Clear space on all sides should be roughly the size of the letter “M” in Minnesota, or half the size of the M State Symbol.



▲
Vertical Format



▲
Horizontal Format



M State

SYMBOL

This is the official mark of M State. It contains a wavelike “M” inside a circle, symbolizing the lakes of Minnesota and representing the first letter of the college’s name. The symbol contains two colors: M State Blue and M State Green.

At times, the M State Symbol may be used alone as the prominent graphic identifier for the college, such as when:

- ▶ Space is limited (e.g. apparel, promotional items)
- ▶ It can be safely assumed the intended audience knows the symbol represents M State (e.g. campus signage, flyers for current students)

MONIKER

The M State Moniker was designed to encourage use of “M State” as the accepted nickname for the college. The nickname does not replace the official college name.

At times, the M State Moniker may be used alone as the prominent graphic identifier for the college, such as when:

- ▶ Space is limited (e.g. apparel, promotional items)
- ▶ It can be safely assumed the intended audience knows the college as M State

The M State Moniker should not be combined with other logos or graphics without approval by the Communications and Marketing Department.

SYMBOL AND MONIKER

For select purposes, the M State Symbol and M State Moniker may be used together on communications intended for internal and external audiences. When using the symbol and moniker together for external audiences, the words “Minnesota State Community and Technical College” should be included elsewhere in the design (in one of the preferred typefaces, as shown on page 14) to properly identify the college to all audiences.



SUB-BRANDED LOGOS

Sub-branded logos have been developed for use by departments, programs, administrative offices and other college units.

If your department would like a sub-branded logo, submit a Project Request to the Communications and Marketing Department. The department is responsible for generating all sub-branded logos; it is not acceptable to create your own.

Sub-branded logos may be applied in two formats: vertical and horizontal, as shown at left.

COLLEGE SEAL

The M State Seal is used alone as the prominent graphic identifier for the college in official communications. It is used in stationery, official letters and more. It is not used for external advertising. It must not be modified in any way.



PRESIDENTIAL SEAL

The presidential seal is used for official communication from the president's office and should not be modified in any way.



M STATE WAVE ICON

The M State Wave Icon is rarely used, and should never be used by itself. Its use is limited to that of a decorative image used in addition to the M State logo. It may be white or M State Blue, and can be faded/lightened when used as a background image.

USAGE GUIDELINES

The M State family of logos and symbols is an important branding tool that requires careful use and guardianship. Distorting the logo in any way dilutes the M State brand and is strictly prohibited. Except for proportional scaling, approved color variations and certain other approved uses, the college logo is not to be changed or altered in any way.

At right are examples of unacceptable logo use.

In short:

- ▶ The logo should appear on all forms of communication, large enough for all words to be legible.
- ▶ Other elements and type must not encroach upon the logo. A clear space of at least 3/8- inch (0.375 inch) must be established and maintained around it.
- ▶ Do not modify the logo in any way.
- ▶ Do not use retired logos.
- ▶ When M State has partnered with an external organization, the partner's trademark or logo may be displayed along with M State's. Partnership logos should not be given greater prominence than M State's logo or symbol, and partner and college logos should be clearly separated.



Never distort, change proportions, or redraw logo



Never switch colors or use unapproved colors



Never rearrange parts of the M State logo



Never change the typeface



Never position the logo at an angle or in vertical rotation



Never mirror logo horizontally or vertically



Never add shapes or graphics to logo



Never overlay text or graphics on logo



Never use a low quality logo



Never put logo on background that creates unreadability



Never add drop shadows, bevels or any special effects



Never adjust the logo to a size that can't be read



Never add a stroke or outline to the logo



Never crop out any portion of the logo

COLORS PRIMARY

Colors are powerful design components that help convey a brand instantly. M State's institutional colors are specific shades of blue, green and white; these colors are uniquely identifiable as part of our college's brand and identity. Blue, green and white are our primary colors. Black or reverse can be used when full-color reproduction is not an option or economically feasible.

SECONDARY

Our supporting color palette complements our primary colors and is used in key identity elements. These supporting colors add vibrancy and dynamics to our identity system.



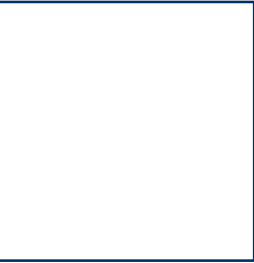
PRINT AND DIGITAL USE

There are different color formulations for print vs. digital use.


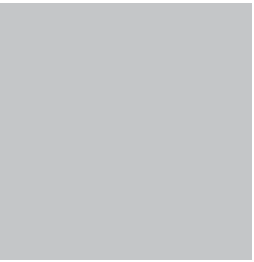


- ▶ For print applications, use CMYK values
- ▶ Use RGB or HEX color values for digital communications

NOTE: Color simulations may be different from the Pantone Matching System® and from conversions made by your design software. Colors displayed on your screen may vary depending on your specific browser or monitor calibration.

M State Primary Colors

		
Pantone - 282 C CMYK - 100/68/0/54 RGB - 0/45/98 HEX - #002d62	Pantone - 349 C CMYK - 100/0/91/42 RGB - 0/112/60 HEX - #00703c	CMYK - 0/0/0/0 RGB - 255/255/255 HEX - #ffffff

M State Secondary Colors

	
Pantone - 7405 C CMYK - 0/10/99/0 RGB - 255/221/0 HEX - #ffdd00	Pantone - Cool Gray 4 C CMYK - 0/0/0/26 RGB - 187/188/188 HEX - #bbbc bc
	
Pantone - 361 C CMYK - 69/0/100/0 RGB - 13/176/43 HEX - #0db02b	Pantone - 285 C CMYK - 100/42/0/20 RGB - 0/117/203 HEX - #0075cb

TYPOGRAPHY

Typography is another important design component that adds consistency to the M State brand.

M State has selected a set of standard fonts for employee use on all internally produced presentations and correspondence. All fonts can be found in the [MSCTC-Communications and Marketing SharePoint](#) site.

Please note that Adobe Garamond Pro, AvantGarde, Calibri and Rockwell were retired as of January 1, 2025.

PRIMARY	<div>Cabin</div> <div>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</div> <div>Cabin regular <i>Cabin italic</i> Cabin bold</div>	<div></div> <div>Cabin is the primary font to be used in website, digital and printed materials for public view.</div>
FORMAL	<div>Crimson Pro</div> <div>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</div> <div>Crimson Pro regular <i>Crimson Pro italic</i> Crimson Pro bold</div>	<div></div> <div>Crimson Pro is an optional primary font that may be used in formal materials, such as letters and publications. It can be used for both headlines and body of text.</div>
HEADLINES	<div>Josefin Sans</div> <div>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</div> <div>Josefin Sans regular <i>Josefin Sans Bk BT italic</i> Josefin Sans Bk BT bold</div>	<div></div> <div>Josefin Sans is an alternate font option for headlines and subheadlines only. It may be used in all media to convey a more informal appearance.</div>

CAMPAIGN TAGLINE USAGE

M State will periodically implement a marketing or advertising campaign tagline. The college is currently using, “Degrees for day jobs. You decide the rest.”

This tagline should be included on appropriate marketing materials.

Designers are not required to incorporate the college tagline into a design. Appropriate uses of the tagline include:

- ▶ Headline or footer of an advertisement
- ▶ Heading of a copy block in an advertisement



Marketing Campaign Version



Tagline Version

CO-BRANDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CO-BRANDING

M State is part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, and both brands should be represented together on certain pieces of media.

To adhere to rules set forth by the Minnesota State system office, M State follows co-branding guidelines provided in the Minnesota State Brand Identity Manual.

Following is an explanation of our co-branding with the system.



Minnesota State College and Universities Logo
(use of either version is acceptable)

MEDIUM	LOGO	Option 1 LOGO WITH IDENTIFIER	Option 2 TEXT ONLY IDENTIFIER	BANNER ICON	SEAL
Publications		Required	Encouraged		
Print/digital/video advertising and marketing materials	Required*	Required*	Required*		
Radio advertising and marketing			Required**		
Website		Required	Encouraged		
Entrance/monument signs	Required		Required		
Campus construction project signs		Required			
Letterhead, envelopes, and note cards			Required		
Diplomas			Required		Encouraged
Merchandise				Encouraged	

* option to link to a landing page with Minnesota State logo and/or text identifier ** “A member of Minnesota State” must be included in script

It is common for partner entities to be involved in M State’s marketing and advertising efforts. Before engaging in any partnership or sponsorship opportunity that incorporates the M State brand name, all parties must contact the Communications and Marketing department at cam@minnesota.edu.



BANNER ICON
The Minnesota State Banner Icon can be used on logo merchandise that includes the M State name. It may be scaled to fit the needs of the media if it follows the Minnesota State Identity and Brand Standards.

OPTION 1: LOGO WITH IDENTIFIER
This option includes the Minnesota State logo, either the horizontal or vertical versions, coupled with a school-specific text identifier. The minimum font size for the text identifier is 9-point. The logo may be scaled to fit the needs of the media as long as it follows the Minnesota State Brand Identity Manual.

Use this option when creating any publications intended for student recruitment materials, annual reports, alumni magazines, legislative publications, brochures, newsletters, news releases, and event programs shall include Option 1: Logo with Identifier.

Preferred option for external advertising, such as website, banner, digital audio, radio, billboard, newspaper, magazine and television, and marketing event signage materials like table skirts and recruitment booths.

OPTION 2: TEXT ONLY IDENTIFIER
This option includes the M State logo, either the horizontal or vertical version, coupled with the Minnesota State affiliation text-only identifier: “A member of Minnesota State system.” Minimum font size is 9-point. The logo may be scaled to fit the needs of the media if it follows the Minnesota State Identity and Brand Standards.

All media, including but not limited to banners, billboards, newspapers, magazines, entrance signage, recruitment booths and stationery shall include a Minnesota State affiliation identifier.



SEAL
The Minnesota State Seal icon can be used on diplomas. It may be scaled if Minnesota State Identity and Brand Standards are followed.

IMAGERY

Photographs and videos about M State can evoke a strong connection to our college community. Choose images that capture moments and perspectives that reflect our mission, vision and values. Visual imagery should portray individuals or groups in ways that feel bold, boundless, welcoming and transformational. Student-centered and faculty-centered photography should appear natural and authentic. Keep inclusivity of age, race, gender and ability in mind. Use unique foreground and/or background elements to create depth and visual texture. Try to capture real, candid moments. A natural smile is always better than a forced one.

- ▶ Have the M State environment in the background.
- ▶ Use depth of field to create a focal point.
- ▶ Feature people engaged in authentic activities, and tell a visual story.
- ▶ Choose photographs that draw people in and make them want to learn more.
- ▶ Thoughtful cropping and dynamic perspectives are recommended.
- ▶ Avoid images that feel too composed or contrived.
- ▶ Unless unavoidable, stock photography and videography should not be used in our materials.



PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO RELEASES

Student images (photo or video) may be used by the college for public relations, marketing and/or publications. If a student does not wish to have his/her image used for these purposes, a written request must be filed with Communications and Marketing. M State will try to honor any request to stop using a photo as soon as it's readily identified and feasible.

All media inquiries and news releases must be directed to Communications and Marketing. Depending on the situation, the department may choose to answer on behalf of the college or may guide you through the media relations process, but your first call is to the dean of integrated communication.

VIDEO PRODUCTION

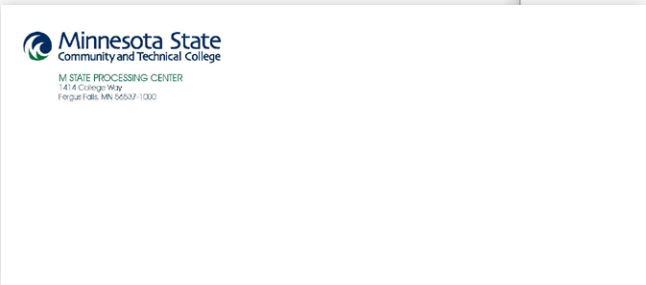
All in-house video projects representing M State need the approval of Communications and Marketing. A register of approved videos is kept, and unauthorized videos will be removed without notice.

Should you contract with an outside consultant to create a video, you must provide the consultant with these Branding and Identity Guidelines to ensure the college brand is incorporated and the standards are followed. Communications and Marketing must review and approve all video content before it is posted for public use.

- ▶ The first mention of the college should always be the full name, “Minnesota State Community and Technical College,” with subsequent references shortened to M State.
- ▶ Always display logos and symbols against a solid background and not a photo or other graphic.
- ▶ All videos must go through the closed-captioning transcription process.

STATIONERY

Approved stationery is available to offices and departments for official use. Order letterhead, note cards and envelopes through the Communications and Marketing Department (see page 4 for more information). Do not order, make or use any stationery that isn't approved by M State.



ENVELOPES

Official envelopes display the M State Signature Logo and address of the college processing center. Department/office name can be included by request.



LETTERHEAD

M State's official letterhead stationery includes the M State Signature, seal and all four campus locations. Discontinue use of any letterhead that does not look like this example.

FAX COVER SHEET



NAME BADGE

Official name badges can be ordered online. Employees are responsible for ordering their own badges and must be sure to fill in all the required information.

BUSINESS CARDS

Official business cards can be ordered online. Employees are responsible for ordering their own cards and must be sure to fill in all the required information.

PRESENTATION TEMPLATES

M State branding and identity guidelines apply anywhere and any time M State is being formally represented, including at off-campus events, meetings and presentations. An M State PowerPoint presentation cover slide and customizable templates are available.

EMAIL SIGNATURES

Employees are responsible for creating their own email signatures in Microsoft Outlook and must use the provided template. The template and instructions are available on the [MSCTC-Communications and Marketing SharePoint](#) site.

To create your email editable email signature:

- ▶ Launch Outlook.
- ▶ In Outlook Select File > Options.
- ▶ Select the Mail Tab > Click on Signatures.
- ▶ Click the New Button.
- ▶ Name the Signature.
- ▶ In the Edit Signature box, create your Signature either by using the text only or the logo option.
- ▶ Underneath the Edit Signature box is a choose default signature, make sure to select your M State signature you just created.

CAMPUS ADDRESSES

900 Highway 34 East, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501
1414 College Way, Fergus Falls, MN 56537
1900 28th Avenue South, Moorhead, MN 56560
405 Colfax Avenue SW, Wadena, MN 56482

Note: We recommend using Cabin font at 9 point minimum in your signature settings.

*Noting pronouns is optional.

TEXT ONLY OPTION

First Name Last Name (He/him/his*)
Title

Minnesota State Community and Technical College
firstname.lastname@minnesota.edu
P: 000.000.0000 **M:** 000.000.0000 (optional)
Address (copy correct campus from below or keep blank)

[minnesota.edu](#) | 877.450.3322

LOGO ONLY OPTION



First Name Last Name (He/him/his*)
Title

firstname.lastname@minnesota.edu
P: 000.000.0000 **M:** 000.000.0000 (optional)
Address (copy correct campus from below or keep blank)

[minnesota.edu](#) | 877.450.3322

COLLEGE MERCHANDISE AND APPAREL

Because of the nature of consumer tastes and changing trends in branded merchandise and apparel, a certain level of freedom and deviation from the branding guide is acceptable. However, all designs must be approved by Communications and Marketing. M State clothing and merchandise may be purchased at M State campus stores.



APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID?

Follow the number!

- 1 Create your Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to receive federal aid. M State's FAFSA code is 005544. Use personal email address. [studentaid.gov](#)
- 2 Take a look at your financial aid options, including the types of financial aid you can get. How to qualify for financial aid grants or student loans. Some need to be awarded, but grants are automatically awarded. [studentaid.gov](#)
- 3 Respond to all requests for information from the college or department. Grants or student loans are awarded by the college or department. [minnesota.edu/supplement](#)
- 4 Review your financial aid offer and accept or decline. You will receive a letter from your advisor. [minnesota.edu/supplement](#)
- 5 Review your financial aid offer and accept or decline. You will receive a letter from your advisor. [minnesota.edu/supplement](#)

FINANCIAL AID FUNDING

Federal grants

- Available for students who have not yet earned a bachelor's degree
- Based on financial need

State grants

- Based on financial need

Scholarships

- Available through M State's Foundations, organizations, local governments, community groups, private employers and other community organizations
- Apply to M State scholarships at [minnesota.edu/scholarships](#)

Federal Direct Loans

- Financial need determines whether loans are subsidized or unsubsidized
- Must be repaid

Work study

- Allow students to earn money by working on campus during the academic year
- Based on financial need

Private loans

- Must be repaid
- Repayment terms determined by the private lender
- Review the list of approved lenders by going to [minnesota.edu/loans](#)

Childcare grants

- Available for students with childcare expenses
- Based on financial need

For more information about financial aid, email [financialaid@minnesota.edu](#), or call 877.450.3322.

Minnesota State
Community and Technical College
[minnesota.edu](#)

RESPONSE FORM

MINN STATE & M State Community and Technical College are proud to be a part of the Minnesota State & M State Community and Technical College family. We are committed to providing a high-quality education and a supportive learning environment for all students.

FAFSA ID
Important! A FAFSA ID is required for all students who are applying for federal financial aid.

First Name: _____
Last Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Student ID #: _____

Enrollment Manager: _____

Visit Date: _____

Visit Time: _____

Visit Location: _____

Visit Notes: _____

LET'S VISIT

DEGREES FOR DAY JOBS. YOU DECIDE THE REST.

[minnesota.edu](#) • 877.450.3322

Learn About M State During a Visit at Your High School

Time and Date	Enrollment Manager
Unable to attend our event? Visit minnesota.edu/programs-and-degrees or scan QR code for more information. Arrange a visit at minnesota.edu/visit , call or text 877.450.3322, email info@minnesota.edu or chat at minnesota.edu/help .	

[DETROIT LAKES](#) [FERGUS FALLS](#) [MOORHEAD](#) [WADENA](#) [ONLINE](#)

COLLEGE READINESS PROGRAM

2025 SPRING SEMESTER
January 13-May 9
Mondays-Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

M State's College Readiness Program (CRP) is designed for multilingual English learners who are considering options for higher education. M State's CRP will build participants' academic language skills. Learners in this program will work with an English language specialist to build their academic language skills. They will also benefit from the support of M State's resource specialists, success navigators, social workers and advisers.

Course is Free. Upon completion, participants will receive a certificate of language proficiency.

Contact:
Heidi Anderson, M State ELL Faculty
[heidi.anderson@minnesota.edu](#)

Minnesota State
Community and Technical College

MINNESOTA STATE
Minnesota State Community and Technical College
A member of Minnesota State, an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer.

IT'S TIME!

Selective admissions applications are due soon. Are you ready?

We are here to help!
If you have questions or need help completing the application, please reach out to a Success Navigator at [bookings.minnesota.edu/success-navigators](#) or scan the QR code below.

QUESTIONS?
Call 877.450.3322
email [info@minnesota.edu](#)
or chat [minnesota.edu/help](#)

MINNESOTA STATE
Minnesota State Community and Technical College
A member of Minnesota State, an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer.

VISUAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

All promotional materials should be approved by Communications and Marketing. Use the online form when requesting or submitting designs to marketing. For consistency and due to budget constraints, all materials should be necessary and developed with the following factors in mind:

- ▶ Budget/cost center
- ▶ Target audience (Example: students, community, faculty....etc)
- ▶ Purpose of the piece
- ▶ What you want the audience to do (the call to action statement)
- ▶ Size(s) you will need
- ▶ Print quantity

DESIGN GUIDELINES

All promotional materials are designed per the following guidelines:

- ▶ M State logo/symbol clearly displayed on the front of each printed piece.
- ▶ M State URL ([minnesota.edu](#)) included on all recruitment and promotional items, unless a more specific address is relevant to the piece, such as [minnesota.edu/nursing](#).
- ▶ Telephone numbers separated with periods (218.631.5555).
- ▶ Clear, focused and compelling text. Only basic who/ what/where/ when/why info included. Audiences can be directed to a website, social media channel, or other contact for more info, if need be.
- ▶ Engaging images and graphics that relate to the content.
- ▶ M State photography and graphics used whenever possible.

STYLE AND WRITING GUIDE

M State's style and writing guidelines are long-established and generally follow the rules of the Associated Press, especially in terms of grammar and punctuation.

At times, college preference is prioritized over AP style, such as with M State's inclusive language guidelines, which follow Minnesota State system guidelines rather than AP.

The Communications and Marketing Department released an updated and expanded M State Style and Writing Guide in 2024 in response to employee requests for more thorough and comprehensive information. Key points are included here for quick reference; the full guide is available on the [MSCTC-Communications and Marketing Sharepoint](#) site, under "Documents."

These guidelines should be referenced whenever external/public communications are created for or on behalf of M State (i.e. flyers, posters, event/wayfinding signage, public reports, mass emails, policies, etc.), to ensure consistent branding and messaging across all campuses and channels of communication.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

- ▶ **READABILITY.** Audience comprehension is the primary goal of any communication. Use words, phrases and sentences that readers can easily understand. Avoid jargon, acronyms, eduspeak, run-on sentences and pretentious language. Be clear and concise.
- ▶ **AUDIENCE.** If you haven't defined your target audience, you can't begin to determine the most effective way of communicating with them.
- ▶ **TONE.** With your target audience in mind, use relatable and engaging language. Most of the time, you'll want to strike a casual yet professional tone, using "you" language.
- ▶ **RESPECT.** Don't write anything about a person or group that you wouldn't be comfortable saying to their face.
- ▶ **HONESTY.** Communicate accurately and truthfully, always.
- ▶ **AUTHENTICITY.** Cliché words and phrases such as "student journey," "state-of-the-art," "amazing," "synergy," "outside the box," "passion" and even words like "transformation" and "evolution" in certain contexts, are overused and thus have largely lost their impact. These types of terms should be used sparingly and only when absolutely true and relevant. Whenever possible, use a simpler or more specific word instead.
- ▶ **WE'RE M STATE.** Not *MState*, *M-State*, *MN State* or any other version. This is important to our brand. Use *M State* only.

WRITING RULES

- ▶ **NO OXFORD COMMAS.** No matter how much you love them. AP style says no, except in rare instances of complex sentences.
- ▶ **SINGLE SPACE AFTER A PERIOD.** (And after a colon or semicolon.) No double spaces. Ever.
- ▶ **USE THE % SIGN.** Only spell out "percent" when used at the beginning of a sentence.
- ▶ **PERIODS IN PHONE NUMBERS.** Not dashes (i.e. 218.846.1234).
- ▶ **WEB ADDRESSES.** Don't share long or complex URLs. Don't include the "www" with a simple URL (i.e. minnesota.edu).
- ▶ **HYPHENS.** Use hyphens when indicating occupation or status (i.e. co-worker or co-author) and when needed to enhance clarity (i.e. It's a 90-day semester). Don't use them with the suffix "-wide" unless preceded by a proper name (i.e. collegewide, campuswide, nationwide, Fargo-wide).
- ▶ **WHEN IN DOUBT, FIND OUT.** If you're unsure of a particular AP style rule, use Google to find a recommendation, or ask the marketing department.

For many more writing rules, see the full *M State Style and Writing Guide*, available on the [MSCTC-Communications and Marketing Sharepoint](#) site, under "Documents."

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- ▶ **STRENGTHS-BASED.** Words like "underperforming," "at-risk," "vulnerable" and "disadvantaged" are deficit-framing and can reinforce negative stereotypes and misperceptions. Instead, use strengths-based language.
 - ▶ "Equity gap" or "Opportunity gap" -instead of- "Achievement gap"
 - ▶ "Communities we partner with" -instead of- "Communities we serve"
 - ▶ "Students gain knowledge and skills at M State" -instead of- "M State addresses students' barriers to success"
- ▶ **PEOPLE-FIRST.** Avoid disability-related words or phrases i.e. "He turned a blind eye." Don't use descriptions that connote pity, such as "afflicted with," "battling," or "suffers from."
 - ▶ "A person with a disability" -instead of- "A disabled person"
 - ▶ "A person who has cancer" -instead of- "A person battling cancer"
 - ▶ "A person who has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder" -instead of- "A person who is bipolar"
- ▶ **RACE AND ETHNICITY.** Avoid broad generalizations and labels, such as "minority" and "racial minority." Be specific, accurate and fair. If race is not relevant to your message, don't include it. When possible, use language that matches the preference of your subject or subjects (i.e. Latino American, Somali American).
 - ▶ Capitalize Black when used in racial, ethnic and cultural contexts. Do not capitalize white, and do not use Caucasian as a synonym for white.
 - ▶ Do not capitalize the word "people" in "people of color"; do not use "person of color" for an individual.
 - ▶ The term Indigenous is preferred, though American Indian and Native American are also acceptable in reference to a group. When talking about an individual, defer to self-identification (such as the person's tribally specific nation).
- ▶ **SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.** Turn attention to policies/structures, not the people affected.
 - ▶ "People whose incomes are below the federal poverty level" -instead of- "The poor" or "Poor people"
 - ▶ "A person impacted by the justice system" -instead of- "Inmate," "Felon," "Offender," "Prisoner," "Criminal," etc.
 - ▶ "Neighborhoods with high poverty rates" -instead of- "Disadvantaged"
- ▶ **GENDER AND SEXUALITY.** Gender refers to a person's social identity while sex refers to biological characteristics. Terminology is complex and continues to evolve; when writing about an individual, ask the person how they want to be referred to and defer to their self-identification. Avoid terms or words that emphasize one gender over another ("First-year student" -instead of- "Freshman") and use "they" as a generic third-person singular pronoun.
 - ▶ A person's name and pronouns are not optional or "preferred." Never use a person's deadname.
 - ▶ If using group descriptors like LGBT and LGBTQ+, it is usually more accurate to follow the descriptor with the word "people" than "community" (i.e. "LGBT people" vs. "LGBT community").
 - ▶ Transgender is an adjective. Do not use it as a noun or use the term "transgendered." Use "transgender man" or "transgender woman" upon first reference of someone whose sex assigned at birth does not match their gender; use of the term "trans" is acceptable upon second reference.
- ▶ **IMMIGRATION.** Use "undocumented" or "unauthorized" immigrant to refer to an individual who is residing in the U.S. without authorization from the federal government. Do not use the terms "illegal" or "alien."

NEWS RELEASES STYLE

News releases follow Associated Press/M State style guidelines to ensure consistency and a uniform M State voice.

The Communications and Marketing news release template contains the M State Signature Logo, the day's date, media contact info, standard text block paragraph styling and consistent fonts, and concludes with a “boilerplate” summary of the college along with required Minnesota State language.

The summary includes college enrollment and program information and thus is updated at least once a year.

News releases should be requested through the online Communications and Marketing Request form (see page 4 for details) and then are written and released to media by the Communications and Marketing Department.

Other M State departments, clubs or organizations may choose to write a draft of their own proposed news release, which must be submitted to Communications and Marketing for review, editing and approval before public release.

M State-branded news releases may not be written or released publicly without the approval of the M State Communications and Marketing Department.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Members of the media will occasionally reach out to the M State Communications and Marketing Department to arrange an interview with a college administrator or faculty member who is authorized to speak on behalf of the college. In those instances, the department will determine the most appropriate subject to be interviewed and will reach out to that person to help make arrangements. Deadlines for these requests are usually tight, and quick response times are needed.

Other times, members of the media reach out directly to M State faculty and staff to request an interview, as they want to speak with a local/college expert on a newsworthy subject. If you've received a direct media inquiry, please notify the Communications and Marketing Department – before the interview is conducted, if at all possible.

For one-on-one assistance with interview prep, reach out to the Communications and Marketing Department.

When representing M State to a member of the media, remember:

- ▶ You are speaking as a representative of M State
- ▶ Profanity, slang and derogatory words are prohibited (don't say anything you wouldn't want to see in print or hear on TV/radio)
- ▶ You are speaking “on the record” unless you specifically tell a reporter otherwise
- ▶ Speak clearly and concisely; answer the question and move on
- ▶ Avoid eduspeak and jargon that could alienate general audience members
- ▶ Be courteous at all times, even in the rare case that an interviewer is not
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and either tell the reporter you will get back to them or direct them to the appropriate official

ACCESSIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

M State's digital media, such as the website, social media, apps and digital content, must be accessible to all users. Minnesota State Digital Accessibility Standards (<https://www.disability.state.mn.us/technical-assistance/digital-accessibility/>) must be followed to ensure content is accessible to everyone with a variety of impairments. By making your digital content accessible, you ensure that everyone can access and interact with your information, regardless of their abilities. Accessible design practices can enhance usability for all users, not just those with disabilities. By law and policy, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities forbids discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 248.07).

Please note that the Federal Register published the Department of Justice's (Department) final rule updating its regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The final rule has specific requirements about how to ensure that web content and mobile applications (apps) are accessible. These new rules will apply to all digital content by April 2026. Visit <https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule> for more detail.

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

- ▶ Use colors with high contrast to make text easily readable.
- ▶ Add alternative text (Alt text) and/or descriptive text to images to explain their content for screen readers.
- ▶ Properly structure content with headings to improve navigation and understanding.
- ▶ Avoid using generic phrases like "Click Here" for descriptive links. Instead, consider typing out the name/URL of the page you're linking to and hyperlinking that text. (Such as, "Visit minnesota.edu/admissions for more information.")
- ▶ Provide subtitles, closed captions (CC) or transcripts for videos.
- ▶ Choose a readable font size and avoid overly small text.
- ▶ Utilize tools to identify potential accessibility issues and ensure your content meets accessibility standards.
- ▶ Emojis, hashtags and links should be placed at the end of your content to prevent screen readers from pausing over them.
- ▶ CamelCase (capitalize the first letter of each word) in hashtags and URLs to enhance readability.

STANDARDS AND TOOLS

To view all standards and tools, visit:

Minnesota State Digital Accessibility Standards:
<https://www.disability.state.mn.us/technical-assistance/digital-accessibility/>

Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA:
<https://www.ada.gov/resources/web-guidance/>

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI):
<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C):
<https://www.w3.org/standards/>

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines:
<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

Web Contrast Checker:
<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

PDF Accessibility Reader:
<https://pac.pdf-accessibility.org/en>

Color Blind Image Tester:
<https://pilestone.com/pages/color-blindness-simulator-1>

Create Accessible Digital Products:
<https://www.section508.gov/create/>

WEBSITE GUIDELINES

M State's website is the college's predominant method of communicating with students, prospective students, alumni, the community and the world. Therefore, a strong online brand image is critical.



WEBSITE STANDARDS

Following are standards for the M State website:

- ▶ All webpages must display the M State Signature Logo and follow guidelines for use of branding components.
- ▶ Fonts used include Cabin (main font) and Crimson Pro Extra (headlines and subheadlines).
- ▶ Color usage and copy writing must follow branding guidelines.
- ▶ Pages must be kept current; web content managers are expected to conduct a quarterly review of their pages to ensure accuracy and relevancy.
- ▶ Links must be active and appropriate.
- ▶ Content must abide by federal copyright laws, be written specifically for M State or be properly sourced (plagiarism is forbidden).
- ▶ Minnesota State Co-Branding Standards, found on page 18-19, must be followed.
- ▶ The college must be referred to as either Minnesota State Community and Technical College or M State.

Communications and Marketing and the college's authorized web content managers are responsible for the content on their designated college web pages. Content is updated by content editors and then edited and approved by a member of Communications and Marketing. For more information on website guidelines and requirements, content editors may visit the team Sharepoint site at [MSCTC-Website Editors-Team - Home](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

M State has a presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and YouTube, maintained by Communications and Marketing. All students, faculty, departments, clubs and organizations are encouraged to use social media as a source of M State-related news and information.

Our social media platforms are an effective means of building brand awareness by sharing multimedia stories about campus news, events, academics and experiences.

Official M State institutional accounts:

- ▶ facebook.com/MStateCollege
- ▶ instagram.com/mstatecollege/
- ▶ x.com/MStateCollege
- ▶ youtube.com/user/MStateTV/feed
- ▶ linkedin.com/school/msctc/

The following are not permitted on social media platforms representing M State:

- ▶ Swearing and crude language
- ▶ References to illegal or questionable behavior
- ▶ Reference to alcohol or illegal substances
- ▶ Hateful or threatening talk; racism, ageism, sexism, etc.
- ▶ Foul behavior or inappropriate comments about M State or any other college or university

Following are social media best practices:

- ▶ Don't post anything on social media that you wouldn't be comfortable saying to someone's face.
- ▶ Communicate in a manner that portrays the social media account as a formal digital platform associated with an institution of higher education.

Any inappropriate usage of a social media platform under the M State brand may be sanctioned through an applicable review system and must abide by the college's policies and procedures.

REQUESTING A NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

To establish a social media presence on behalf of M State, submit a CAM request to begin the process. The set-up process includes a review of goals/strategy, account set-up, intended audience, naming of handles, account managers and content. Departments, groups or organizations that establish a social media page will be responsible for content and regular maintenance.

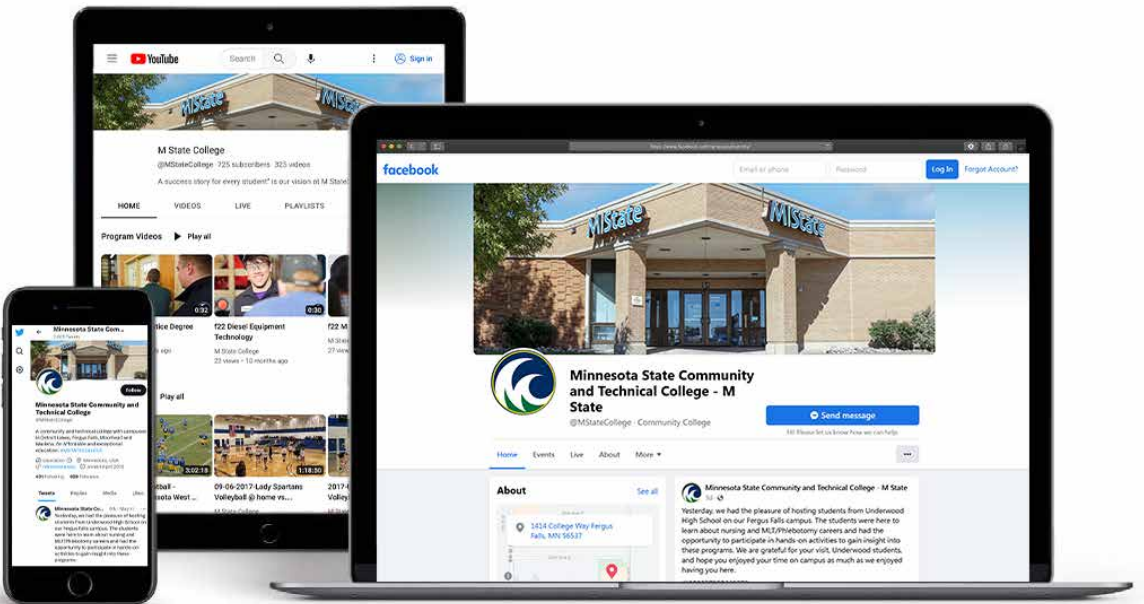
Before submitting a new account request, consider the following:

- ▶ Define how posting on a social media platform strategically fits with the overall communication efforts (email newsletters, mail, traditional marketing, web, etc.) of your department/group/organization and how it supports the M State mission.
- ▶ Determine which platform your team has the bandwidth to manage based on your content plan, to ensure you can maintain the site and achieve your goals.
- ▶ Define the audience you want to reach on that particular platform. Focus on sharing and outlining content that this audience would like to engage with, such as student stories, news, events, photos, videos and appealing content such as holidays, national days, fun campus content, etc.
- ▶ Shared content needs to include digital accessibility features, such as alternative text (alt text) on photo and video captions.

- ▶ Digital communities require regular engagement, including responses to comments, direct messages and questions in a timely manner.
- ▶ Ensure photos you post are original photos you and/or your team have taken, are photos from the college image library, are photos provided with permission to use by the original poster, or are purchased stock photography. It's important to note when taking photos or video of students, staff, faculty or campus visitors, a consent form may be required.
- ▶ The M State Symbol should be used as the primary photo on your social media platform (the profile image on Facebook, X or YouTube). An additional photo, such as a cover or background photo, may represent your program, club, group, organization or department. Ensure the sizing is correct for each placement; follow M State branding and identity guidelines.
- ▶ Federal requirements, including FERPA and directory data privacy policies, must be followed when posting information about students, employees or alumni.
- ▶ All social media platforms under the M State brand will be reviewed for inactivity. Accounts that are not updated regularly will be considered for deactivation or deletion.
- ▶ M State social media accounts must be created with an institutional email account. At least two account admins must be assigned, for security and continuity purposes.



The M State Symbol should be used as the primary photo in any social media account representing M State



ATHLETIC GRAPHICS

The M State Spartans have an official Athletic Wordmark Logo and Athletic Symbol Logo. Neither may be used as a replacement for any M State logo or symbol. Spartans is the official name of M State athletics.

USAGE

- ▶ Recognized M State student groups and organizations may use Spartans logos upon approval.
- ▶ Each M State sport has its own Spartan uniform and logo usage guidelines. These guidelines extend to gear and facilities, including the gymnasium floor.
- ▶ All uniforms and related sports materials that are currently in use are approved for continued use.
- ▶ Any restyling of uniforms is allowed a certain amount of creative freedom but must complement the M State brand in regard to color and design.
- ▶ Spartans logos and naming conventions must be followed and not altered.
- ▶ The Spartans logo/symbol should be reproduced in a size that is prominent, easily readable and proportionately appropriate for the application.
- ▶ When the logo or symbol cannot be produced in color, a black or reverse version may be used.



▲
Athletic Wordmark Logo



▲
Athletic Symbol Logo

Primary Colors



Pantone - 282 C
CMYK - 100/68/0/54
RGB - 0/45/98
HEX - #002d62



Pantone - 7405
CMYK - 0/10/99/0
RGB - 255/221/0
HEX - #ffdd00

Secondary Colors



Pantone - 661 C
CMYK - 100/85/0/10
RGB - 41/63/148
HEX - #293f94

COLOR REPRODUCTION OPTIONS

Spartans logos should be used in color whenever possible and economically feasible. Lightened versions of the colors should not be used; they should always be used at 100%.

SPARTANS MASCOT AND ICONS

The Spartans mascot and icon images may be used in the promotion of student life at M State. Student groups and organizations may use these images upon approval by the Communications and Marketing Department.

SPARTANS TAGLINE

“Go Big Blue” is the Spartans tagline. It may be included on any Spartans promotional materials, but is not required.





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2025 Minnesota State Community and Technical College Branding and Identity Guidelines



MINNESOTA STATE

*Minnesota State Community and Technical College,
a member of Minnesota State, is an affirmative
action, equal opportunity educator and employer.*