



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. The M State Communications and Marketing department are responsible for communicating the M State's brand in a dependable manner and holds the primary authority for making decisions on use of branding.

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

Anyone creating written, visual, digital or multimedia materials for external/public audiences for or on behalf of M State should reference 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's branding components are proprietary. Use of any logos, designs or other components is an acknowledgment of your acceptance of the guidelines herein.

EMPLOYEES: M State employees should use this guide in tandem with the tools and resources available to them on the CAM department's SharePoint site.

STUDENTS: Individual students are not permitted to use M State logos or other branding components.

STUDENT GROUPS: Student groups may use M State logos and other branding components, provided all branding standards in this guide are followed and prior approval has been obtained from the CAM department.

ALUMNI: M State alumni groups may use M State logos and other branding components, provided all branding standards in this guide are followed and prior approval has been obtained from the CAM department.

VENDORS: 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.

The latest version of this guide can be found on the CAM SharePoint site, mnscu.sharepoint.com/sites/MSCTC-CommunicationsMarketing or by reaching out to the CAM team.

This guide is a working document and is updated as necessary by the M State Communications and Marketing Department, herein referred to as the CAM department or CAM team.

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.



Minnesota State
Community and Technical College



Vertical Format



Minnesota State
Community and Technical College



Horizontal Format

SIGNATURE LOGO USAGE

Vertical Format

Horizontal Format



FULL COLOR LOGO
should be used
whenever possible.



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



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



**WHITE SINGLE
COLOR LOGO**
is also acceptable
only 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.

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.

Other graphic elements or text should never intrude upon the logo.



▲
Vertical Format



▲
Horizontal Format



MState

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 CAM department approval.

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.



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.





Communications and Marketing Department

Minnesota State Community and Technical College



Communications and Marketing Department

Minnesota State Community and Technical College

SUB-BRANDED LOGOS

Sub-branded logos have been developed for use by departments, programs, administrative offices and other college units. To inquire about a sub-branded logo for your department, submit a project request to the CAM department via the CAM SharePoint site.

It is not acceptable to create your own sub-branded logo.

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



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.

UNOFFICIAL LOGOS

M State has a diverse range of clubs and organizations. Other than Spartan Athletics, there are no official logos for such organizations. Unofficial logos may be designed by student clubs or organizations for use on their own promotional materials, such as clothing, banners or posters.

Unofficial logos must be approved by the CAM department prior to public use, by submitting a project request via the [CAM SharePoint](#) site.

LOGO USAGE GUIDELINES

M State logos and symbols are important branding tools that necessitate careful use and guardianship. Distorting them in any way dilutes the M State brand and is strictly prohibited.

- ▶ 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 partners 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.

At right are examples of unacceptable logo use.



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

Colors are powerful design components that help convey a brand instantly.

PRIMARY

Blue, green and white are M State's institutional colors. These colors are uniquely identifiable as part of our college's brand and identity. Black or reverse can be used when full-color reproduction is not an option or economically feasible.

SECONDARY

Secondary colors add vibrancy and dynamics to support our primary brand identity. They are used in key identity elements.

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 - #bbbcbc



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 downloaded for employee use from the [CAM SharePoint](#) site.

Use of other fonts on marketing materials is not acceptable without prior approval from the CAM department.

PRIMARY	<p>Cabin abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>Cabin regular <i>Cabin italic</i> Cabin bold</p> <p>◀ Cabin is the primary font to be used in website, digital and printed materials for public view.</p>
FORMAL	<p>Crimson Pro abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>Crimson Pro regular <i>Crimson Pro italic</i> Crimson Pro bold</p> <p>◀ 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.</p>
HEADLINES	<p>Josefin Sans abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>Josefin Sans regular <i>Josefin Sans Bk BT italic</i> Josefin Sans Bk BT bold</p> <p>◀ 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.</p>

CO-BRANDING

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 the horizontal or vertical version is acceptable)

Medium	Minnesota State Logo	Option 1 Logo with Identifier	Option 2 Text-Only Identifier	Option 3 Banner Icon	Board of Trustees Seal
Publications		Required	Required		
Print/digital/video advertising and marketing materials	Required*	Required*	Required*		
Radio advertising and marketing			Required**		
Website		Required	Required		
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 the 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 CAM department at karen.reilly@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 7-point.

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.

This is also the 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 the Minnesota State system." Minimum font size is 7-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.

For large scale materials, the identifier shall be clearly readable from a distance.



◀ SEAL

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

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 Spartans 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 CAM department.

SPARTANS TAGLINE

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



IMAGERY

Photographs and videos about M State can evoke a strong connection to our college community and reflect our mission, vision and values. Student-centered and faculty-centered. 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.

- ▶ 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 the CAM department. M State will try to honor any request to stop using a photo as soon as it's readily identified and feasible.

VIDEO PRODUCTION

All in-house video projects representing M State require prior approval by the CAM department. 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. CAM 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 and may be ordered through the CAM department. Do not order, make or use any unapproved stationery.

◀ 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

Employees are responsible for ordering their own official name badges by submitting a request via the CAM SharePoint site.

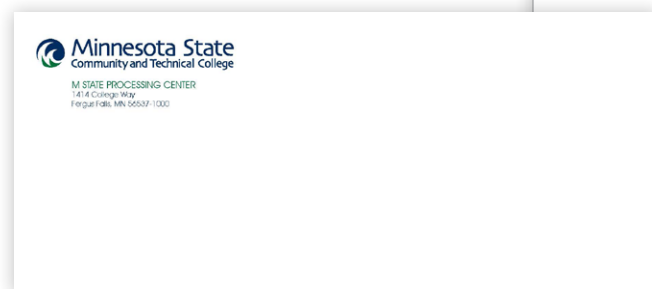
PRESENTATION TEMPLATES

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 on the [CAM SharePoint](#) site.



◀ 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.



▲ ENVELOPES

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



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 [CAM SharePoint](#) site.

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

Due to 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 the CAM department.



VISUAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

All M State-branded promotional materials should be created or approved by the CAM department before public release. Visit the [CAM SharePoint](#) site to request the creation or review of a marketing project.

All promotional materials must be 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/visit.
- ▶ All marketing materials follow AP writing style guidelines.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Engaging images and graphics that relate to the content.
- ▶ M State photography and graphics used whenever possible.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID?

Follow the numbers!

- 1 Explore your options. Learn about the various types of financial aid available, how to qualify, and how to apply.
▶ studentaid.gov
- 2 Apply. Create your FSA ID and complete your FAFSA, using your personal email address and M State's FAFSA code: 005541.
▶ studentaid.gov
- 3 Log in. Watch your student email for info from us, and check your financial aid status on E-Services, at SpartanNetsFinancialAidHubApplicationStatus.
minnesota.edu/spartannet
- 4 Review and respond. Your award letter will be found at SpartanNetsE-ServicesFinancialAidAwardLetter. Complete any additional requirements as directed in the letter.

Responsible Borrowing
REMEMBER: While grants and scholarships do not need to be repaid, a loan must be repaid, regardless of whether you complete your degree. For more information, visit studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-borrow-understand.



PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Federal grants

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

Minnesota 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 for M State scholarships at minnesota.edu/scholarships

Federal Direct Loans

- ▶ Financial need and FAFSA eligibility determine loan offers
- ▶ Must be repaid

On-campus student employment

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

Private loans

- ▶ Must be repaid
- ▶ Loan terms determined by the lender

Childcare grants

- ▶ Available to students with childcare expenses
- ▶ Based on financial need

For more information about financial aid, email financialaid@minnesota.edu or call 877.450.3322.



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A member of Minnesota State, an affirmative action, equal opportunity educator and employer.

LET'S VISIT



M STATE

Learn About M State During a Visit at Your High School

Time and Date	Location	M State Representative
Unable to attend our event? Visit minnesota.edu/degrees for more information. Arrange a visit at minnesota.edu/visit , call 877.450.3322 or email info@minnesota.edu .		

DETROIT LAKES **FERGUS FALLS** **MOORHEAD** **WADENA** **ONLINE**



minnesota.edu | 877.450.3322

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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
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IT'S TIME!

Selective admissions applications are due soon. Are you ready?




DEGREES FOR DAY JOBS
YOU DECIDE THE REST.

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 visit minnesota.edu

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DETROIT LAKES • FERGUS FALLS • MOORHEAD • WADENA • ONLINE

2025-2026 CAMPAIGN

TARGETED TAGLINES

'From Books to Boss'

'Career Minded, Family Focused'

'Careers for Day Jobs, You Decide the Rest.'

BACKGROUND AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

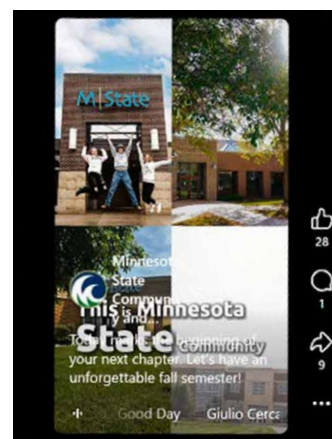
In November 2024, M State selected Fargo-based ad agency H2M: Brand Haus through a competitive RFP process for a three-year strategic branding and marketing partnership. The Communications and Marketing (CAM) department began collaborating with H2M in May to develop a campaign that builds on previous years' success while elevating our approach through fresh insights and creative refinement.

Based on new survey data collected in June, this year's campaign continues to leverage the audience personas developed in prior years – Wanderers, Upgraders, It's Timers and Next Steppers – and retains the humorous tone that resonates with our prospective students, while refining our messaging to more strongly communicate return on investment (ROI) and brand identity.

QUICK INSIGHTS

This year's campaign is a strategic evolution – building on what we know works, refining based on new research, and aligning every element with student preferences and institutional strengths. Our billboards, digital ads, video ads and integrated in-house marketing efforts combine to reinforce brand visibility and create a well-rounded, multi-channel approach that ensures consistent messaging and increased impact. By combining humor, clarity and value messaging, we aim to increase engagement, drive enrollment and reinforce M State's brand across all platforms.

View full [2025-2026 Marketing Campaign](#) on the M State's Communication s and Marketing team sharepoint.



BRAND VOICE AND MESSAGING

BRAND VOICE

M State's brand voice is authentic, inclusive, student-centered and forward-thinking. It reflects the institution's commitment to accessibility, innovation and community engagement while inspiring current and prospective students to take the next step.

- ▶ Motivational and encouraging
- ▶ Approachable and welcoming
- ▶ Clear and relatable
- ▶ Uses "you" language when talking to students

BRAND MESSAGING

M State brand messaging is approved by M State Cabinet as a foundational resource for college leaders and others who represent the college in an official capacity. It serves as a reference for those engaging in external communications – whether speaking at public events or with media or overseeing grant applications, mailings or any other public-facing materials.

Current brand messaging revolves around **three key themes**:

- ▶ Student-centered.
- ▶ Opportunity-driven.
- ▶ High-value.

There is also **M State Cabinet-approved language** to use when speaking publicly about M State. Such as:

- ▶ "M State provides affordable, opportunity-driven, student-centered education that prepares students for real-world success."

College communicators are encouraged to refer to the "Brand Messaging" document, available on the [CAM SharePoint](#) site, for more information.



TEXT STYLE AND WRITING GUIDELINES

M State's text style and writing guidelines apply to all external/public communications created for or on behalf of M State (i.e. flyers, posters, event/wayfinding signs, public reports, mass emails, policies, etc.) and generally follow the rules of the Associated Press. 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.

A few key points are included here for quick reference. Visit the [CAM SharePoint](#) site to access the full Text Style and Writing Guidelines.

FUNDAMENTALS

- ▶ **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.** Communicate with them in a relatable way.
- ▶ **USE THE M STATE BRAND VOICE AND MESSAGING.**
- ▶ **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Use words, phrases and sentences that readers can easily understand. Be clear and concise.
- ▶ **BE HONEST AND RESPECTFUL.** Communicate accurately and truthfully.

WRITING RULES

- ▶ We're M State. Not MState, M-State, MN State or any other version.
- ▶ No Oxford commas.
- ▶ Periods in phone numbers (i.e. 218.846.1234)
- ▶ When in doubt, follow AP style. Use Google to find a recommendation or ask the CAM team.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- ▶ **STRENGTHS-BASED.** "Communities we partner with" rather than "Communities we serve" -or- "Students gain knowledge and skills at M State" rather than "M State addresses students' barriers to success."
- ▶ **PEOPLE-FIRST.** Avoid descriptions that connote pity, such as "afflicted with" or "battling," and avoid labeling people. "A person with a disability" rather than "A disabled person."

PRESS RELEASES

The CAM department writes and distributes M State-branded press releases to share newsworthy stories and announcements about the college with our communities through newspapers, TV stations, radio and other media outlets.

Press releases follow the guidelines contained within the M State Text Style and Writing Guide. Word count for a standard press release is about 600 words; feature stories run higher.

STRATEGY: VALUE OVER VOLUME

The M State Communications and Marketing team's strategy for press releases is simple: Value Over Volume. Our current media relations are strong because we prioritize quality and relevance in our press releases.

WHY WE PRIORITIZE VALUE.

Journalists are selective and time-constrained; sending frequent, low-impact releases leads to message fatigue and damages our credibility. A high-volume strategy that does not prioritize value would be counterproductive for M State, leading to reduced media coverage and weakening our media relationships.

- ▶ Better media relationships, credibility and coverage

Our volume is still as high or higher than at comparative schools. M State issues an average of about 40-45 press releases per year – 3.75 per month. (not including academic honor and graduation releases).

- ▶ Over the past three years, we've issued 42, 43 and 46 press releases.
- ▶ Alexandria Tech issues approximately 12-24 press releases per year
- ▶ NDSCS publishes 24-48 per year

OUR STRATEGY WORKS.

Our media monitoring data shows 49% of our online media mentions in the past year have come from news outlets (the remaining 51% came from social media and web sources). This is significantly higher than typical benchmarks for community colleges, where news media usually accounts for less than 30% of total mentions. Despite posting to social media nearly every day, our limited number of press releases are clearly driving a large share of our media visibility, underscoring effectiveness of our current strategy.

- ▶ 149% of 30,249 online media mentions were from news outlets – significantly more than the 30% or less average at community colleges
- ▶ IMedia/journalist feedback, Google Alerts and Analytics, and other insights tell us the vast majority of our press releases are picked up by at least one news outlet

LOOKING AHEAD.

Our long-term press release strategy is to keep doing what works: Value Over Volume.

- ▶ Maintain a flexible, quality-over-quantity approach
- ▶ Target at least 35-40 strong, well-timed releases per year
- ▶ Align releases with institutional priorities and media interest

WHO WRITES AND DISTRIBUTES M STATE PRESS RELEASES?

M State's senior communications specialist, in collaboration with the requester and any other parties involved.

WHO RECEIVES THEM?

The CAM department maintains a data file of all media outlets within M State's target audience range, as well as sublists of media contacts associated with each of the college's four campus communities. Depending on the nature and local appeal of a press release, it may be distributed broadly to all of M State's contacts, to one or more sublists of campus-specific contacts, or to select, targeted contacts.

Every approved press release is also shared as a News item on the M State website and across one or more of M State's social media platforms.

WHO CAN REQUEST A PRESS RELEASE, AND HOW?

Any M State employee may request a press release via the online CAM request form. Requests are vetted and preliminary drafts must go through the proper approval channels before the press release is finalized and publicly shared.

WHAT'S CONSIDERED NEWSWORTHY FOR A PRESS RELEASE?

The more mass appeal a story has, and the timelier and more unique it is, the better. The story must be likely to carry beyond M State's campuses; media outlets need to believe it's something their audiences will want to hear about, even in the age of information overwhelm.

- ▶ What's important to us here at M State is not always considered newsworthy outside our internal sphere, and;
- ▶ Media outlets are interested in things happening now or in the near future, not things that happened weeks or months ago.

NEWSWORTHY:

- ▶ Unique public events held on campus or led by the college
- ▶ Awards of distinction won by M State or a representative of the college (i.e. staff/faculty member, department, student, student group)
- ▶ 'First in the region' accomplishment stories
- ▶ Highly unique or inspiring human interest stories about a representative of the college
- ▶ Stories that tie into current events or hot topics, presenting M State or a representative as an authority on the matter

NOT NEWSWORTHY:

- ▶ Awards won by staff or faculty unrelated to their work at the college
- ▶ Stories that do not align with M State's mission, vision and values
- ▶ Stories that do not move M State forward in a positive way
- ▶ Stories about timely events or happenings that occurred more than one week ago (exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis)

PRESS RELEASES Continued

COLLABORATIVE PRESS RELEASES

Also called joint or partnership press releases, collaborative press releases are public announcements of new partnerships or collaborations between M State and at least one additional entity. They typically focus on the public/student benefits of the collaboration.

To request that the M State CAM team leads the writing and distribution of a collaborative press release: Submit a CAM request well in advance of the desired release date – ideally three to four weeks prior. Collaborative press releases typically take longer to complete than M State-only releases, as they must be reviewed and approved by multiple parties within all participating entities.

To request that the M State CAM team participates in the writing and distribution of a collaborative press release that another organization is leading: Submit a CAM request to let the team know about the upcoming release, sharing any needed contact information with us so we can work with the collaborating entity.

THIRD-PARTY PRESS RELEASES

When another organization sends out a press release that mentions or directly affects M State, and it's not a collaborative release that we helped create, that's a third-party press release. Examples include:

- ▶ Releases about M State student competition winners shared by the organizers of that competition
- ▶ Releases shared by the Minnesota State system that touch on topics of high relevance to M State, such as grant awards

Third-party press releases often share good news that help move the M State story forward in a positive way, but they are not the property of M State and cannot be officially shared or distributed by M State.

If you're aware of a third-party press release pertaining to M State, share it with the CAM team via a CAM ticket request. The CAM team can sometimes recraft content from third-party press releases into original, localized press releases that are able to be shared by M State.

MEDIA RELATIONS

MEDIA REQUESTS

Reporters and other members of the media may reach out to M State staff and faculty seeking information and/or interviews for a news story. These requests often come to the CAM department first, but should a member of the media contact you directly:

- ▶ Remain calm and courteous. Every interview request is an opportunity for M State to build or maintain a positive relationship with the media.
- ▶ If the request is from a major news outlet, such as The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead or WDAY, forward the request immediately to the President's Office and/or CAM department.
- ▶ If the request regards controversial topics, such as legislative/political issues or pending litigation, or if it involves an official statement from the college, forward the request immediately to the President's Office and/or CAM department.

In all other instances:

- ▶ If you're comfortable and willing to be interviewed – and, importantly, you're confident using M State's brand voice and current brand messaging – feel free to speak with the reporter, either in the moment or in a later interview that you and the reporter have mutually arranged. Notify the CAM team of the interview (or scheduled interview) as soon as possible.
- ▶ If you're willing to be interviewed but would like help preparing, schedule a later interview with the reporter and request the CAM team's assistance as soon as possible.
- ▶ If you're uncomfortable or unwilling to be interviewed, refer the reporter directly to the senior communications specialist on the CAM team, who will locate an alternative appropriate M State source.

PRESS CONFERENCES

Press conferences are held at M State on select occasions when the college has a major announcement that is highly likely to be of interest to news media and the public. Requested or approved by the President's Office, press conferences are coordinated by the CAM department in collaboration with the president and any other involved departments, entities and individuals.

For more information about press conference procedures, event formats, speaker prep, and related media alerts/press releases, contact the CAM department.

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](#) must be followed to ensure content is accessible to everyone. By law and policy, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities forbids discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 248.07).

[Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments.](#)

ACCESSIBLE SUGGESTIONS

- ▶ 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](#)

[Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA](#)

[Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#)

[World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\)](#)

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)

[Web Contrast Checker](#)

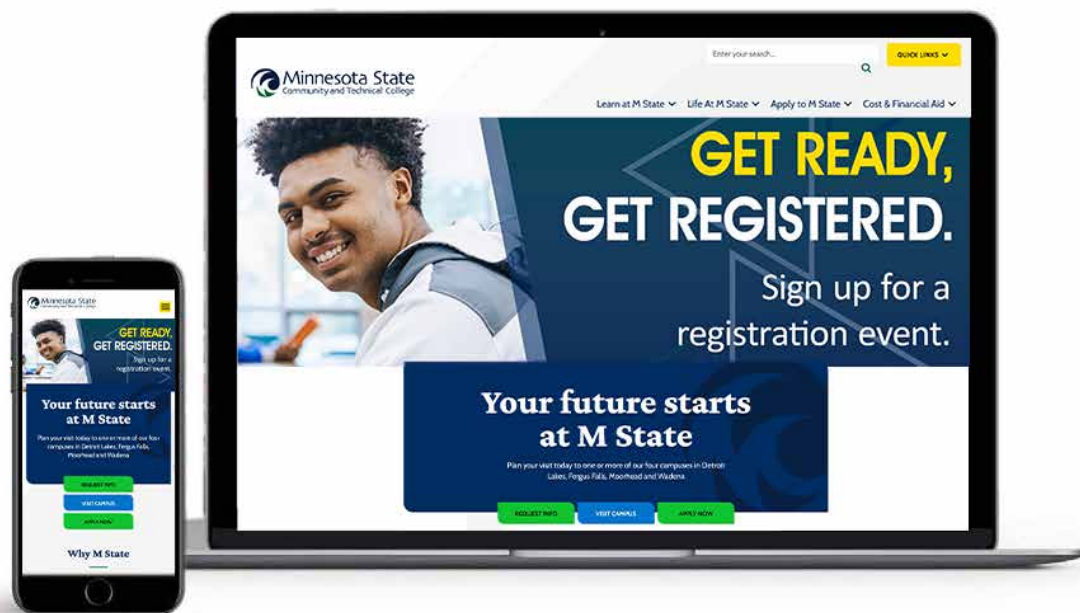
[PDF Accessibility Reader](#)

[Color Blind Image Tester](#)

[Create Accessible Digital Products](#)

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

- ▶ 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.

CAM team 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 CAM. For more information on website standards, visit the [CAM SharePoint site](#).

DIGITAL ADVERTISING

M State strategically uses online advertising to build and maintain a strong brand identity and positive brand perception across various digital channels. Digital advertising initiatives include campaign development, targeting, budgeting and performance analysis.

DIGITAL GUIDELINES

- Know your audience
- Clear, simple headlines and text
- Strong call to action
- Visual, branded design
- Optimized for multiple digital sizes
- Navigate to relevant webpage

For more information about digital advertising, contact the CAM department.



525 x 1002 px



768 x 1028 px



300 x 600 px



1002 x 525 px



300 x 250 px

▲
Example of
sizing of digital
materials.

SOCIAL MEDIA

M State has a presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and YouTube, maintained by CAM team. 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/

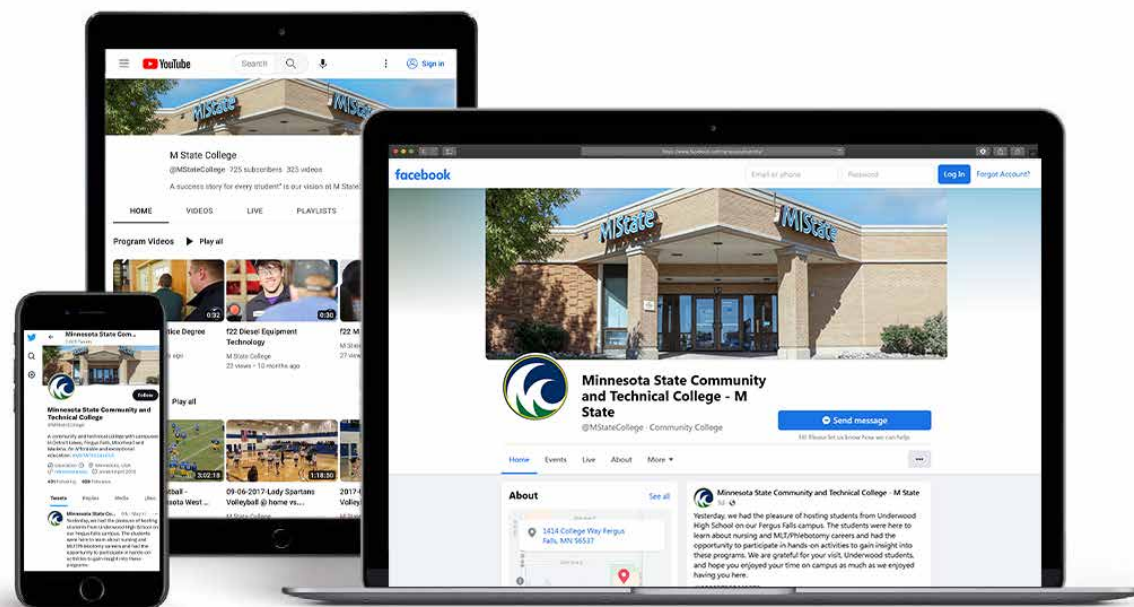
The following are not permitted on social media platforms representing M State:

- ▶ 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 setup 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 login information must be shared with the CAM department.



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

MARKETING CHARTERS

The M State Marketing Charter is a tool for exploring the viability of requests for uniquely substantial CAM department support, such as tailored marketing or program revitalization campaigns. The charter form establishes a structured process for handling these requests, ensuring clear communication and collaboration between departments. The process is designed to be strategic, data-driven, and closely aligned with recruitment initiatives, ultimately helping the CAM department determine the most effective use of resources to maximize impact and achieve institutional goals.

The charter form can be found on the [CAM SharePoint](#) site. For more information, contact the dean of integrated communications.

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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 the Minnesota State system