

7. Brand Voice Guidelines

What is a brand?

“A brand is the identity and story of a company that makes it stand out from competitors that sell similar products or services. The goal of branding is to earn space in the minds of the target audience and become their preferred option for doing business.” - Hubspot

Whether you realize it or not, your school is a brand. You have a unique story and a unique experience to “sell” to students and your website should represent this. From open houses and campus tours to emails, social media, and your website, everyone should know your brand and understand their role in maintaining the brand values. If you boast a “friendly, welcoming environment,” on campus then you want everyone from the professors to the administrators to the cleaning staff to feel and show that too. Your digital content, including the website, should operate the same way.

Current high school students, first-gen students, and adult students alike rank the website as the most used and most helpful information source they use during their search process (RNL, [E-Expectations Trend Report](#)). Therefore, it is critical that your website leverages your brand and the experience that students will have at your school, so take the time to get to know your brand and what you have to offer that sets you apart from other schools. Then, be sure to implement that experience into your web content.

What is the A-State brand?

Brand goals are determined by strategic priorities and create a unique value proposition that will entice prospective students and help them succeed in reaching their goals. For A-State brand identity to succeed, the visual and language guidelines need to be expressed clearly and consistently across all materials, platforms, and channels.

The A-State brand reflects a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking identity, rooted in community pride and academic excellence. Our brand values include:

1. **Every Red Wolf Counts:** A-State emphasizes creating a close-knit, supportive environment where students can find a sense of home and connection.

2. **Innovation and Research:** With its R2 designation as a "High Research Activity" institution, A-State highlights experiential learning opportunities, collaborative projects with organizations like NASA and USDA, and a commitment to impactful research.
3. **Accessibility and Opportunity:** A-State positions itself as accessible and affordable, with strong support for first-generation and non-traditional students. The university focuses on guiding students through admissions, financial aid, and academic success with minimal barriers.
4. **Pride and Tradition:** Red Wolf traditions, campus life, and NCAA Division I athletics foster a strong school spirit and pride.
5. **Global Engagement:** The A-State community is comprised of a vibrant mix of cultures and offers study abroad opportunities and international campuses to enhance global perspectives.

Mission Statement: Arkansas State educates leaders, enhances intellectual growth, and enriches lives.

Core Message: *A-State is a "big time" university that is student-friendly and innovative. We offer world-class academics, exciting student research opportunities, a vibrant campus life experience, NCAA Division I athletics, etc. The two words we feel describe it are dynamic and distinguished. We want our website to indicate that we are a destination university.*

Overall, the A-State brand communicates a welcoming and empowering environment where students are equipped to achieve their personal and professional aspirations while making meaningful contributions to their communities and beyond.

How do I put the brand into action?

Content—written and visual—should reflect these on both a macro and micro level. It's not just about which words we use or who appears in the images; it's about ensuring that the story we tell across the website consistently aligns with these values.

To put the A-State brand into action, it's essential to integrate our brand values and mission into every aspect of communication, ensuring consistency and resonance with target audiences.

Start by focusing on one or two of the brand values. They are essential features that we want our audiences to associate with A-State, and elaborate on the mission statement and core message described above.

1. **Community and Belonging:** Showcase stories of students finding a home at A-State, participating in traditions, and connecting through clubs, athletics, and events.
2. **Innovation and Research:** Highlight research projects, faculty accomplishments, and partnerships with organizations like NASA and USDA.

- 3. Accessibility and Opportunity:** Feature testimonials from first-generation and non-traditional students, and provide clear, accessible information on financial aid and resources. Remember to check for accessibility. We need to walk the walk if we're going to talk the talk.
- 4. Pride and Tradition:** Celebrate A-State's unique traditions, Red Wolf pride, and NCAA Division I athletics in engaging ways.
- 5. Global Engagement:** Include content that showcases cultural events, study abroad programs, and the wide-ranging backgrounds of students at A-State.

By embedding A-State's brand values and goals into every piece of communication, the university can effectively tell its story, inspire action, and build meaningful connections with its audience.

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