SOUTHWEST

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY ™

IDENTITY & BRAND STANDARDS MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Southwest Minnesota State University is grounded in a resilient spirit of continuous improvement. Our brand is no exception. To succeed in our mission, we have to present ourselves in a way that's compelling and consistent.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The following pages introduce SMSU's brand identity and are meant as a guide for all internal parties, agency partners and vendors to follow. From our system of logos and color scheme to our messaging and tone, it's imperative to utilize these standards in order to create meaningful, lasting connections.

The better our ability to share the SMSU story, the more immediate associations we can create. By consistently applying these guidelines, you can be sure all visual communications you produce will comply with brand standards and marketing strategies, ultimately building a stronger SMSU brand.

If you have any questions regarding the application of these standards, please contact the Communication & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu**.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is more than a message. It's a collection of unique experiences that shapes the perceptions and expectations of an organization. A brand has a unique personality and features that become recognizable with key audiences through consistent use of voice and design elements. As these elements are reinforced, brand recognition grows.

A distinct professional brand identity has the power to convey longevity and legitimacy while creating a genuine connection with the individuals who interact with it.

THE SMSU BRAND

As part of Southwest Minnesota State University, we have a strong influence on how individuals perceive our University. Each time a student, parent, alumnus or community member interacts with SMSU, we have an opportunity to engage in a positive, meaningful way.

Whether talking about athletics, education or campus life, we are responsible for telling the SMSU story in a manner consistent with the University's mission, vision and values. Our brand is what allows us to accomplish this task.

BRAND OVERVIEW

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Southwest Minnesota State University is driven by a core set of building blocks that guide how we engage with our students and the SMSU community.

MISSION

To prepare students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities.

VISION

SMSU is recognized throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.

VALUES

- Discovery through innovative teaching, research and other high-impact experiences.
- Civic engagement and strategic partnerships.
- Developing broadly educated and well-rounded leaders.

BRAND PROMISE & PRIORITIES

DISCOVER. ENGAGE. LEAD.

Building a brand is about more than advertising or a tagline. It's about delivering on our promise with a tangible benefit that makes Southwest Minnesota State University relevant and valuable.

At SMSU, we strive to deliver a personal, flexible and memorable experience that will build future leaders for generations. Our brand promise is to deliver an unwavering, steadfast approach to education, helping students, faculty and the community discover, engage and lead.

THE SMSU STORY

Founded in 1963, Southwest Minnesota State University was originally named Southwest Minnesota State College. Over 50 years and two name changes later, SMSU is a respected four-year public university that offers high-quality education in the liberal arts and professional studies.

SMSU strives to create a culture and core curriculum capable of inspiring students, faculty and staff to be forward-thinking. We are dedicated to the idea of providing educational opportunities that empower our students to enrich their communities through innovative thought and action. SMSU is a diverse and inclusive home for all.

Together with the students and faculty, we're driven by a singular goal: be a forward-thinking, experiential organization committed to creating university-wide excellence while promoting community, collaboration and communication.

SMSU IS SMALL AND RESILIENT; STEADFAST AND PROGRESSIVE; AMBITIOUS AND EXPERIENTIAL.

LIVING THE BRAND

The SMSU brand will be shared through advertising, our website, our classrooms and on-campus spaces, public relations materials, recruitment efforts and more. But a brand is something that lives and breathes every day in our staff and culture.

Whether you work for SMSU or partner with the brand, always remember to hold your own attitudes and behaviors up to the University standard of discovering, engaging and leading. Each of us can live the SMSU brand in a more powerful way than any marketing message could convey.

BRAND BREAKDOWN
VOICE

COMMUNICATION GOALS & BASICS

Communication is key to a successful brand. Adhering to the voice guidelines on the next page will allow the Southwest Minnesota State University community to speak in a singular, recognizable way with a coherent, unified message.

All writing and communication for SMSU needs to reflect a core set of goals. Although specific pieces may have differing intentions, such as driving applications, recruiting faculty or attracting the attention of alumni, all writing should be created with five core principles in mind.

Additional writing and formatting tips for documents and web pages can be found at https://www.smsu.edu/administration/communicationsmarketing/styleguides.html.

Developed by the Office of Communications & Marketing, the Style and Usage Guide outlines a consistent style for assets that serve as official correspondence on behalf of the University.

WRITE FOR ALL READERS.

Communication should be student-centric with the reader in mind. Remember, our readers may vary in age, background, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and more, so language should feel universal and easily understood. Your audience may not even be the student, but their peers or family.

BE INCLUSIVE AND POSITIVE.

The SMSU brand is about progress and inclusiveness, so writing should have an optimistic tone, avoiding words like "don't" or "can't." Be conscious of copy that's inclusive and appeals to the diverse fabric of our audiences.

BE APPROPRIATE.

Make sure copy makes sense for the audience, topic and context in which it will be viewed. Write in a way that suits the situation, and adapt your tone accordingly.

BE CONCISE AND CONVERSATIONAL.

Avoid lengthy jargon, and strive to keep copy as simple, clear and conversational as possible. We encounter students at a confusing time when they're tasked with making one of the biggest decisions of their lives thus far, so be human in communications, and make sure you're always writing to a useful goal for the reader.

USE ACTIVE VOICE.

Avoid passive verbs and voice. Passive voice emphasizes the verb in a phrase rather than the subject. Using active voice will help copy flow more naturally and feel energetic. To start, try to avoid words or phrases like "there are," "by," and "was."

BRAND PERSONALITY

A brand's personality is a set of characteristics that describes that brand as if it were a person. By having a clear personality and point of view, brands are more relatable, unified and memorable.

Southwest Minnesota State University's personality defines the tone for how we communicate and describes how we want our audiences to perceive and feel about the SMSU brand. These personality traits drive the voice for all SMSU branded communications.

RATIONAL WORDS

These words represent how we want people to think of Southwest Minnesota State University.

PROGRESSIVE

AMBITIOUS

EXPERIENTIAL

EMOTIONAL WORDS

These words represent how we want people to feel about Southwest Minnesota State University.

VIBRANT

GENUINE

PROUD

VOICE & TONE

WHAT IS VOICE?

A brand's voice is the sum of all verbal or written communication across advertising copy, website copy, internal collateral pieces, radio ads and more. Voice is important because it helps show the audience a brand's point of view, revealing the brand's values, beliefs and approach to life.

In previous sections, we highlighted SMSU's vision and values. Our brand voice is how we convey these principles to the public.

THE SMSU VOICE

Because our personality is vibrant, genuine and ambitious, the SMSU brand voice is focused on being real, optimistic and inviting.

OUR VOICE IS

REAL AND DIRECT

OPTIMISTIC

INVITING

OUR VOICE IS NOT

SERIOUS

ERUDITE

SUPERIOR

WE ARE A PROUD UNIVERSITY AND SPEAK PASSIONATELY ABOUT IT.

WHAT IS TONE?

Tone is how we bring personality to our brand voice. Tone allows brands to be caring, funny, serious, light-hearted or witty depending on how they want their audience to feel about them.

Think of it this way: you have the same voice all the time, but your tone might change depending on the situation or emotional state of the person you're talking to. The words we choose, phrasing, inflection – all of these things help set our brand's tone. If voice is what we say, tone is how we say it.

TONE OVERVIEW

To effectively communicate, we have to use different tones for different audiences. When we look at the tone of Southwest Minnesota State University messaging, refer to the Tone Guide on the next page. The Tone Guide illustrates how the tone of voice should feel for each of our key audiences.
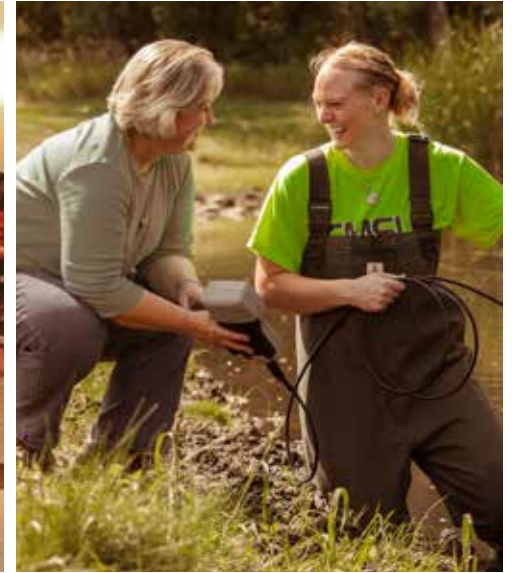
STUDENTS

INCLUSIVE

INNOVATIVE

PERSONAL

PARENTS

OPTIMISTIC

COMMITTED

HARDWORKING

MARSHALL
COMMUNITY

FORWARD-THINKING

SUCCESSFUL

COLLABORATIVE

FACULTY & STAFF

SUPPORTIVE

INNOVATIVE

PROGRESSIVE

BRAND BREAKDOWN
VISUAL

THE LOGO

The Southwest Minnesota State University logo is the epitome of our brand. It exudes pride, strength and academic excellence, and serves as one of the strongest components of the University's identity.

This single element represents how we are perceived in our state, across the nation and around the world. Consistent usage of the logo is essential to creating a distinct brand presence and gaining instant recognition across all marketing and media channels.

SMSU logos and names are trademarks. We utilize a licensing program through which all items that include our name and logos are coordinated. Any item must be coordinated through this licensing program if it includes any version of our name: Southwest Minnesota State, Southwest Minnesota State University, SMSU and SMSU Mustangs.

PRIMARY MARK

INSTITUTIONAL LOGO

The Institutional Logo is our primary logo and will appear on most University communications. It showcases the Minnesota state outline, with a sunbeam radiating from our location in the southwest portion, showing possibility and potential right here at SMSU.

The primary mark will appear on most University communications. It can be used in full color or one-color options. The following examples showcase the proper color usage when using the Institutional Logo in one color on both light and dark backgrounds.

Academic and Administrative Departments and Programs must use the primary mark in their communications. A unit-specific logo can be created upon request and serve as representation for individual campus entities on letterhead, merchandise, apparel, as well as printed and electronic communications.

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Full Color Primary

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

One Color (Brown)

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

One Color (Black)

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Two Color Reversed

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

One Color Reversed

SOUTHWEST
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

One Color (Brown)

THE MUSTANG MARKS

In January of 1968, students, faculty and staff chose "Golden Mustangs" as the nickname for their athletics teams. Four months later, a palomino quarter horse named Simba Sixtyseven became the official mascot of the school. In later years, "Golden" was dropped to have the mascot officially be known as the Southwest Minnesota State Mustangs.

These logos are used primarily by SMSU Athletics and sport-specific teams. On the following pages, you will see the correct usage for all versions of the SMSU Mustang logos. All uses must be approved by the SMSU Communications & Marketing Office. Apparel and promotional items must be produced by a licensed vendor. For licensed vendors, questions or approvals, please contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu**.

PRIMARY MUSTANG LOGO

The SMSU Mustang logo can be used for either University communications or for athletics.

Full Color SMSU Mustang

One Color SMSU Mustang (Brown)

One Color SMSU Mustang (Black)

Full Color SMSU Mustang

SMSU Mustang Reversed

One Color SMSU Mustang (Brown)

SECONDARY MUSTANG LOGO

The Full Mustang logo should be used primarily for athletic purposes and is secondary to the primary Mustang mark. Do not add any identifier under the logo – this will distract from the school name.

Full Color Full Mustang

One Color Full Mustang (Brown)

One Color Full Mustang (Black)

Full Color Full Mustang

Full Mustang Reversed

One Color Full Mustang (Brown)

ALTERNATIVE MUSTANG LOGO

This mark is most often used for general purposes and branding. See page 49 for more uses of this mark.

Full Color Mustang Head

Full Color Mustang Head

One Color Mustang Head (Brown)

One Color Mustang Head (Black)

Mustang Head Reversed

One Color Mustang Head (Brown)

OTHER USES OF THE MUSTANG MARKS

There are exemptions allowed for various departments, organizations or clubs associated with the University; below are a few examples. Approval is needed before creating and using any new marks involving the Mustang or SMSU word marks. Contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu** for questions and approvals.

OTHER MARKS

UNIVERSITY SEAL

The SMSU University Seal is recognized as the official symbol of the University. It is to be used primarily by and at the discretion of the President's Office on official documents such as diplomas and other official materials. Permission for use must be obtained in ALL cases. Contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu** for questions and approvals.

The Institutional Logo or Mustang Marks should be used on all other materials and applications.
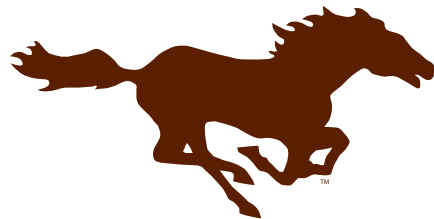
"RUNNING MUSTANG" LEGACY MARK

This is a logo that is used across campus by many organizations. It carries with it many years of Mustang tradition and pride. It should only be reproduced in official SMSU colors. The Running Mustang should always face right. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by Communications & Marketing.

CLEAR SPACE & SIZING

To protect the integrity of the logo, be sure to account for details such as safe area, scaling and minimum size. The following pages will show the proper amount of space to leave around all University logos to ensure uninterrupted readability. They will also show the minimum size requirements for each logo to ensure legibility of all elements.
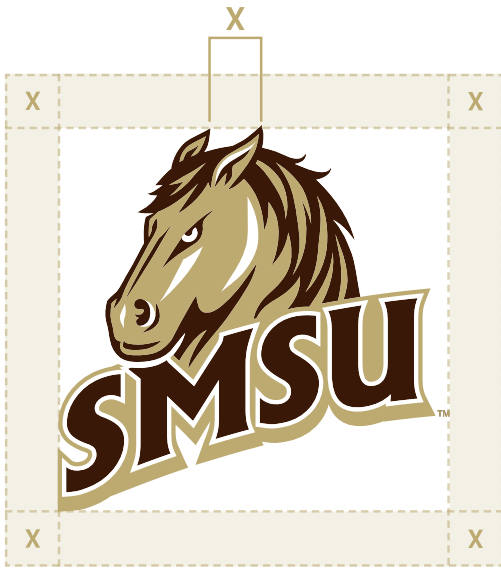

SAFE AREA

The recommended amount of clear space for this logo is equal to the width of the second letter S in SOUTHWEST.

1.5"

MINIMUM SIZE

To ensure legibility, this logo should never be reproduced at sizes smaller than an inch and a half (1.5") wide.

SAFE AREA

The recommended amount of clear space for all Mustang logos is equal to the spacing between the ears on the mustang's head.

.75"

.75"

.75"

MINIMUM SIZE

To ensure legibility, all Mustang logos (SMSU Mustang, Full Mustang, Mustang Head) should never be reproduced in a way that makes the mustang head smaller than three quarters of an inch (.75") wide.

BACKGROUNDS

In certain instances, you may use the SMSU logo over imagery. Place the logo in a position over areas of solid color or areas that are not busy enough to conflict with the logo. Be sure to use photography that does not compete with the legibility of the logo.

Do not place any logo over an image, texture or pattern that diminishes or overshadows the prominence or legibility of the logo.

ACCEPTABLE
USAGE

NOT
ACCEPTABLE
USAGE

LOGO TAGLINE & TREATMENT

On advertising materials promoting SMSU, the "Discover. Engage. Lead." tagline should only be used with the primary Institutional Logo.

When deciding whether or not to use the tagline with the logo, please consider the readability of the materials based on the guidelines below:

- On print ads, brochures and in broadcast creative, the tagline should be utilized with the logo to drive awareness.
- On media with limited space or timing constraints (such as outdoor billboards or banner ads), the logo is best served without the tagline.

The tagline "Discover. Engage. Lead." should be in Titillium Black. If you're using the full color logo, the tagline should be in SMSU Gold. If you're using a one color version of the logo, the tagline should be in the same color that you're using.

The logo should always be the most prominent element, therefore the tagline should never go past the left edge of the letter O and the right edge of the second letter S of SOUTHWEST.

UNIT-SPECIFIC & AFFILIATED MARKS

The Southwest Minnesota State University logo is the most visible and important piece of the brand. When creating unit-specific or affiliated marks, it is imperative that the SMSU logo always appears consistently and correctly. Because of this, all variations of the SMSU logos should be created by the Communications & Marketing Office. This includes any academic or administrative department or program as well as any athletic/student club or organization. If you have questions or need to find a mark, please contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu**.

LOGO MISUSE

To ensure a cohesive and clear brand, proper use of the SMSU logos is critical. Please refrain from using old and/or non-approved logos. If you have questions, contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu**.

☒ **DO NOT APPLY A STROKE TO THE LOGO.**

☒ **DO NOT APPLY A DROP SHADOW TO THE LOGO.**

☒ **DO NOT ROTATE THE LOGO.**

☒ **DO NOT STRETCH THE LOGO.**

☒ DO NOT ADJUST PROPORTION OF THE LOGO.

☒ DO NOT ALTER THE COLORS OF THE LOGO.

☒ DO NOT USE LOGO VERSIONS/COLORS THAT ARE HARD TO READ OR SEE.
BE SURE YOU ARE USING THE REVERSED VERSIONS OF ONE COLOR LOGOS.

CO-BRANDING

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

SMSU is part of the Minnesota State College & Universities, and on specific pieces of communication, both brands should be represented together.

The SMSU brand and the Minnesota State brand do not need to be side by side, especially when there is potential word duplication. To create a pleasing layout, use space and sizing of the Minnesota State logo to create visual separation.

There are three options for Minnesota State affiliation, with a variety of applications:

OPTION 1
LOGO WITH IDENTIFIER

OPTION 2
TEXT ONLY IDENTIFIER

OPTION 3
BANNER ONLY

The chart on pg. 39 shows when each option should be used. For examples, see pg. 40 & 41.

MEDIUM	LOGO	OPTION 1 LOGO WITH IDENTIFIER	OPTION 2 TEXT ONLY IDENTIFIER	OPTION 3 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	

See procedures on the following pages

* 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

OPTION 1: LOGO WITH IDENTIFIER

The Minnesota State logo, either the horizontal or vertical version, may be coupled with a school-specific text identifier. The minimum font size is 9 point. This logo may be scaled to fit the needs of the member institution. This identifier may be used in conjunction with SMSU's Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action statement(s).

OPTION 2: TEXT ONLY IDENTIFIER

When a member institution includes the Minnesota State affiliation identifier on stationery, monument signs or together with its brand on websites, publications and marketing materials, it is acceptable to use the following text-only identifier: "A member of Minnesota State." But because SMSU already has "Minnesota State" in our institutional logo, an additional option is "A member of the Minnesota State System.

The minimum font size is 9 point. The text-only Minnesota State identifier may be formatted in the font and/or color of the member university's brand. For large-scale materials, the identifier shall be clearly readable from a distance and located above any potential landscaping or snow lines that may obstruct the view.

A member of the Minnesota State system

OPTION 3: BANNER ONLY

The Minnesota State banner icon can be used on logo merchandise that includes our University's name.

MARKETING USE

When legible and with adequate space, please use the text identifier or Minnesota State logo in marketing communications. On some executions (such as display banners or billboards), the Minnesota State logo may not be used due to space constraints. Please see the Communications & Marketing team for approval of these situations.

COLOR PALETTE

PRIMARY COLORS

SMSU BROWN

PMS 497 C
CMYK 20 / 61 / 65 / 86
RGB 58 / 24 / 7
HEX #3a1807

SMSU GOLD

PMS 466 C (non-metallic)
CMYK 20 / 23 / 60 / 10
RGB 188 / 170 / 113
HEX #bcaa71

SECONDARY COLORS

SMSU TEAL

PMS 4166 C
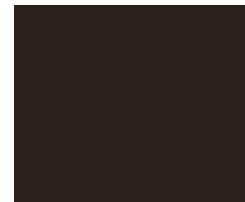CMYK 74 / 41 / 52 / 18
RGB 60 / 110 / 109
HEX #3c6e6d

SMSU BLUE

PMS 4162 C
CMYK 33 / 7 / 17 / 0
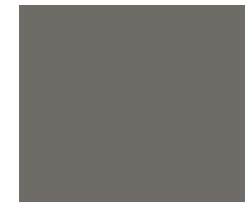RGB 170 / 206 / 208
HEX #aaced0

SMSU RUST

PMS 7573 C
CMYK 10 / 58 / 93 / 31
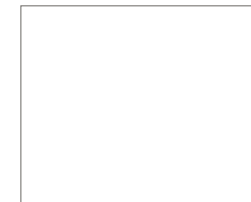RGB 165 / 96 / 33
HEX #a56021

SMSU BLACK

PMS 412 C
CMYK 61 / 64 / 66 / 75
RGB 42 / 33 / 29
HEX #2a211d

SMSU GREY

PMS 2333 C
CMYK 56 / 49 / 52 / 18
RGB 111 / 108 / 104
HEX #6f6c68

WHITE

CMYK 0 / 0 / 0 / 0
RGB 255 / 255 / 255
HEX #ffffff

ABOUT THE PRIMARY COLORS

Brown and gold are SMSU's primary colors, representing the wholesome, genuine University personality. They serve as anchor points in establishing our identity and differentiating us from other universities. These colors should be implemented consistently in all communications and marketing materials. Refer to the color values listed when working with SMSU's brand colors.

BROWN

Brown is our primary color and is to be used as the point of emphasis for backgrounds or as the color of headline typography.

GOLD

Gold is our secondary color and is best utilized for accent pieces or subhead typography.

ABOUT THE SECONDARY COLORS

Each secondary color relates to and complements the primary palette and has a specific purpose. By following these guidelines, the SMSU color palette will bridge the gap from traditional to new and fresh, providing character, readability and flexibility.

TYPOGRAPHY

The SMSU typography is built around the brand's bold, vibrant personality but emphasizes clarity and uniformity. Our brand utilizes a variety of typefaces based on the medium, space, readability and more. Both fonts can be downloaded for free at **google.com/fonts**.

PRIMARY

TITILLIUM WEB BLACK

AA BB CC DD EE FF GG HH II JJ KK LL MM NN OO PP QQ RR SS TT UU VV WW XX YY ZZ

TITILLIUM WEB REGULAR

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

TITILLIUM WEB ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

SECONDARY

ROBOTO SLAB BLACK

AA BB CC DD EE FF GG HH II JJ KK LL MM NN OO PP QQ RR SS TT UU VV WW XX YY ZZ

ROBOTO SLAB REGULAR

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

TYPOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

Below are examples of correct typographic layouts using headlines, subheadlines and body copy. For headlines, primarily use Titillium Web Black, but you may also use Titillium Web Regular to provide words of emphasis. You should use Roboto Slab Bold for subheadlines and other callout needs. Titillium Web Regular and Italic should always be used for body copy.

HEADLINE FONT HERE
SUBHEADLINE HERE

Body copy example typeface here. *Consecto consed* **que namenditassi tenis ut modis** eturiae nulpa int quist,Cupta namus nus que nostint, sincipis rem con et volo blaborrovid untiusant. Od ex eicipsae nimaximus molore niam et accatur, sum volesti volorerum es sam simodio.

SUBHEADLINE HERE
HEADLINE FONT HERE

Body copy example typeface here. *Consecto consed* **que namenditassi tenis ut modis** eturiae nulpa int quist,Cupta namus nus que nostint, sincipis rem con et volo blaborrovid untiusant. Od ex eicipsae nimaximus molore niam et accatur, sum volesti volorerum es sam simodio.

HEADLINE FONT HERE
SUBHEADLINE HERE

Body copy example typeface here. *Consecto consed* **que namenditassi tenis ut modis** eturiae nulpa int quist,Cupta namus nus que nostint, sincipis rem con et volo blaborrovid untiusant. Od ex eicipsae nimaximus molore niam et accatur, sum volesti volorerum es sam simodio.

BRAND SYMBOLS

MUSTANG

The SMSU Mustang is more than a powerful horse; it's the face of SMSU and something for students, faculty, staff and the Marshall community to rally around.

The Simba Sixtyseven palomino quarter horse, with its rare coloring and distinct features, was carefully chosen as a representation of our University. They travel in herds, charging into the new, the next and sometimes the unknown – much like our own community.

Use the Mustang in marketing materials to emphasize pride, bravery, freedom and our unique approach to education.

RADIAL ACCENTS

SMSU uses radial symbols like stars, sun rays and compasses throughout campus in architecture, logos and more. The distinct accents are a nod to our inclusive community and our goal to bring out the best and brightest in our students, allowing untapped potential to be realized and released.

Use radial accents to represent inclusion, guidance and potential.

BRICK ARCHITECTURE

Brick is a building material that represents a solid foundation. The brick used throughout the SMSU campus honors the University's roots, and signals an institution that is built to last. We are a relatively young university, but we are an integral part of the higher education in southwest Minnesota, and beyond.

The University's use of brick represents our commitment, our solidarity and our strength, creating an environment that allows our students to run like Mustangs.

GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

LINES & GRIDS

Lines used throughout the SMSU brand materials signify continuity and permanence. They are used as accents or to create grids, another element unique to the brand. These grids allow the information to feel organized and clear. There are no finite rules for the use of lines and grids, but use this entire document and the following pages as a guide when creating brand assets.

MUSTANG LOGO BACKGROUND

The SMSU Mustang Head logo can be used as a background element through brand materials. It must be ghosted back to 15% or lower. When placing the logo on a dark background (i.e. the logo will be in a lighter color than the background before being ghosted back), be sure to use the reverse logo - not the one color logo.

Brown background - gold reversed Mustang Head logo

Gold background - brown one color Mustang Head logo
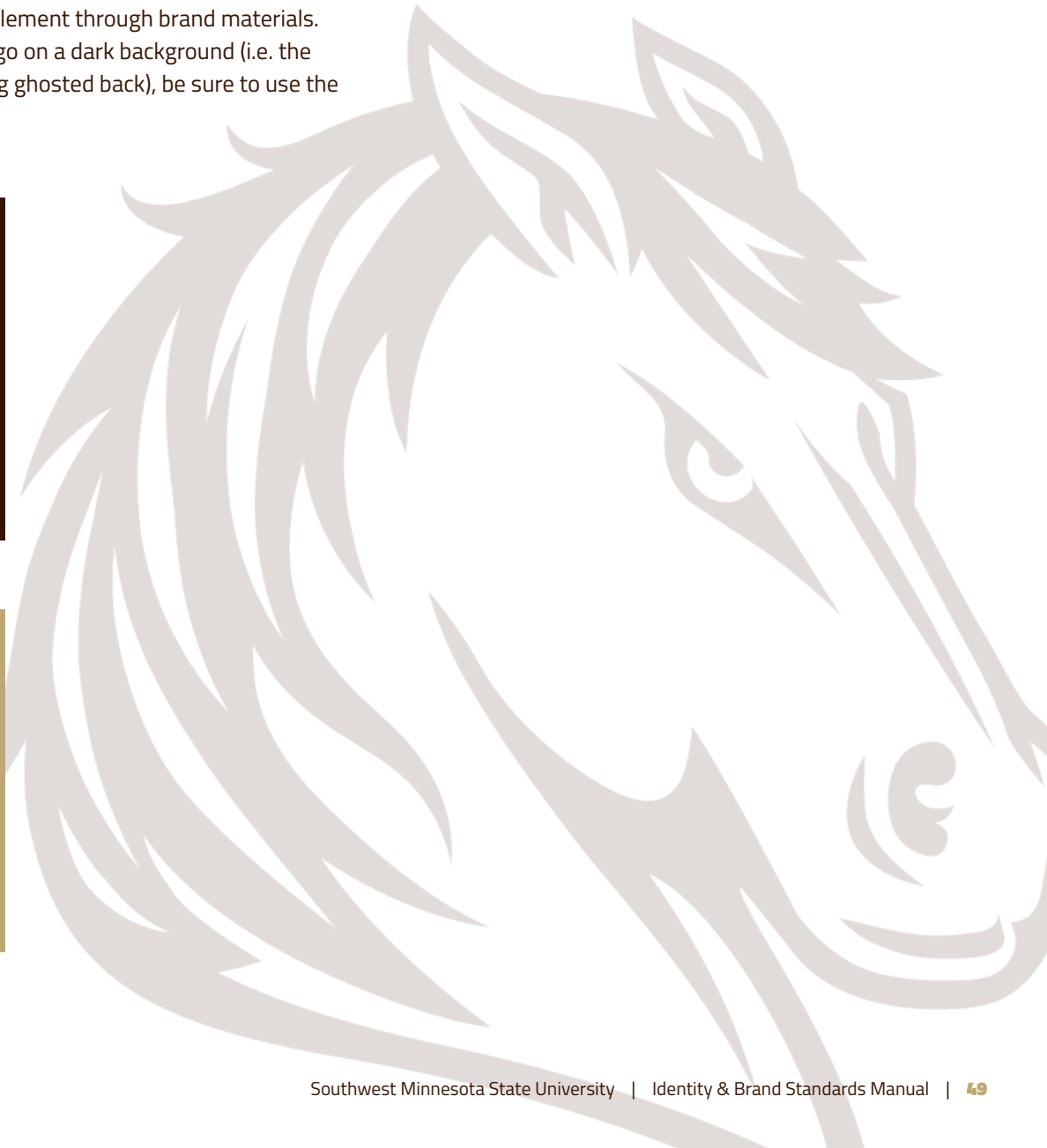
COLOR BLOCKS

The SMSU brand is bold, bright and clean. The preferred background for most communications is white, but there are cases when bright colored blocks may be used. Those cases could include social posts, posters, large graphics, etc. Remember to use caution when pairing colors—not every color will look great on top of another color. The next page provides some acceptable color pairings. The WCAG/ADA section (pg. 62) provides acceptable color pairings for compliance and readability.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

DISCOVER.
ENGAGE.
LEAD.

IMAGERY IN TYPE

Another way to bring bright, energetic visuals to the brand is putting imagery inside type. This helps show activity and campus visuals in a new way. It's also a great way to bring the tagline to life.

When doing this type of graphic, type should always be Titillium Web Black.

This type of graphic should only be used in certain situations. Letters should be large enough for images to be clearly seen. Try to keep words short or concise—lengthy words won't work well with this. Large scale type and visuals (i.e. poster or wall graphic) are ideal for this type of graphic.

SCOVER.
NGAGE.
LEAD.

IMAGERY

Southwest Minnesota State University is a student-centered University. Showing these students and the people who drive their experience and the impact they have on the community through imagery is key to building our brand and showing our impact.

The direction for our University's imagery is authentic with a unique perspective. This is derived from the forward-thinking, welcoming approach we apply to education and allows us to showcase the thinkers and the doers while visually communicating sentiments like inclusion, joy and learning. Candid imagery with emotion is the basis for what will invoke engagement and create a meaningful connection between SMSU and each of our audiences.

Whether you're shooting your own photography or are purchasing images from a website, you should always be taking a non-traditional approach to capturing and utilizing distinct, organic moments.

Photography should follow four basic principles to tell the real SMSU story:

HUMAN · NATURAL · POSITIVE · COMMUNITY-CENTRIC

Learn more and see examples on the following pages.

HUMAN

Images should focus on people, capturing real human moments and interactions. Images should take on a vibrant, warm and intimate approach showing strength in relationships and the value of connection.

NATURAL

Natural images are more engaging, impactful and relatable. Aim for natural interactions and settings over staged photos with studio backdrops and natural lighting over flash.

POSITIVE

When featuring SMSU staff and students, focus on positive, authentic moments and happy, candid connections to show the University's high energy and inclusiveness.

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC

SMSU is a small school, and we take pride in that. We foster a close-knit community, and photography can help showcase it. Capture the unique surroundings and atmosphere of our campus and community and the real people within them.

PHOTO TREATMENT & PRESET

When creating brand assets, it is important to have a cohesive brand look and feel. SMSU has a brand Lightroom preset. Contact the Communications & Marketing Office for filtered imagery. This preset pulls out some of the cooler tones in photos (like blues and purples) to highlight the rich, warm reds and yellows. This preset should be used on brand assets where it makes sense—it does not need to be on every photo, but should be used when possible.

It is important to note that this preset is just one step of the photo process. Photos should still be color-corrected and edited the way you normally would. Apply the preset once you're satisfied with the photo. This preset is also just a starting point. Some photos may need extra attention depending on the colors in the photos. If you feel a photo looks unnatural or has changed too much, adjust the individual saturation levels as needed.

If you have questions or need help, please contact the Communications & Marketing Office at **communications@smsu.edu**.

BEFORE

AFTER

BEFORE

BEFORE

AFTER

AFTER

WCAG & ADA COMPLIANCE

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) cover a wide range of recommendations to ensure content is more accessible to people with disabilities, low vision, hearing loss, cognitive limitations, speech disabilities and more. Similarly, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) also recommends standards to ensure compliance and usability across a wide range of differently abled individuals. SMSU's Web Office strives to ensure that the University website continuously meets these accessibility standards.

WCAG 2.0 level AA requires a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text. WCAG 2.1 requires a contrast ratio of at least 3:1 for graphics and user interface components (such as form input borders). WCAG level AAA requires a contrast ratio of at least 7:1 for normal text and 4.5:1 for large text. Large text is defined as 14 point (typically 18.66px) and bold or larger, or 18 point (typically 24px) or larger.

This guide is aimed to help quickly identify which colors, fonts and font sizes from the SMSU brand standards can be used on top of certain SMSU brand colors. To review full WCAG guidelines visit **https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/**. To check the contrast in your materials meets WCAG and ADA standards, you can also use this online resource: **https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/**.

✓ ACCEPTABLE COLOR USAGE

| White **White** Gold **Gold** Blue **BLUE** Rust **Grey** | White **White** Brown **Brown** Black **Black** | White **White** **BLUE** | Brown **Brown** Teal Black **Black** Grey | White **White** Brown Black | White **White** Gold **Gold** Blue **BLUE** Rust **Grey** | White **White** Brown Blue **BLUE** Black | Gold **Gold** Brown **Brown** Teal **Teal** Rust **Rust** Black **Black** Grey **Grey** |

✗ NOT ACCEPTABLE COLOR USAGE

| Teal **Teal** Rust Grey | Blue **BLUE** Teal **Teal** Rust **Rust** Grey **Grey** | Gold **Gold** Brown **Brown** Blue Rust **Rust** Black **Black** Grey **Grey** | White **White** Gold **Gold** Teal Rust **Rust** Grey | Gold **Gold** Brown Blue **BLUE** Teal **Teal** Black Grey **Grey** | Brown **Brown** Teal **Teal** Rust Grey | Gold **Gold** Brown Blue **BLUE** Teal **Teal** Rust **Rust** Black | Blue **BLUE** |

EXAMPLES & TEMPLATES

The following examples and advertising templates illustrate these brand standards in action. They're meant to provide inspiration and show how all brand elements work in conjunction to create a unified brand message.

To order business cards or other University templates, visit the Communications & Marketing page on our website: **www.smsu.edu/administration/communicationsmarketing/**
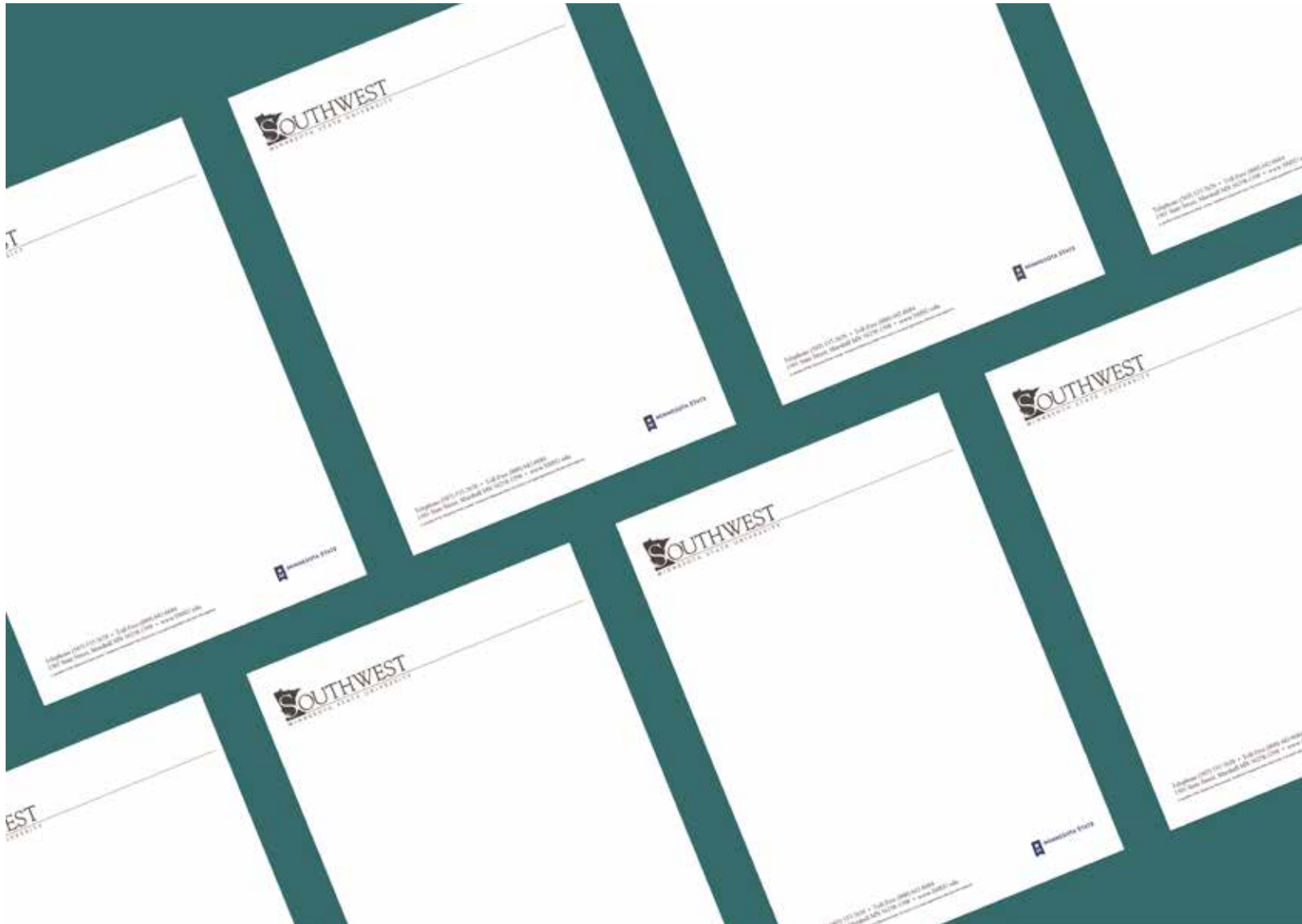
BUSINESS CARDS

EMAIL SIGNATURE
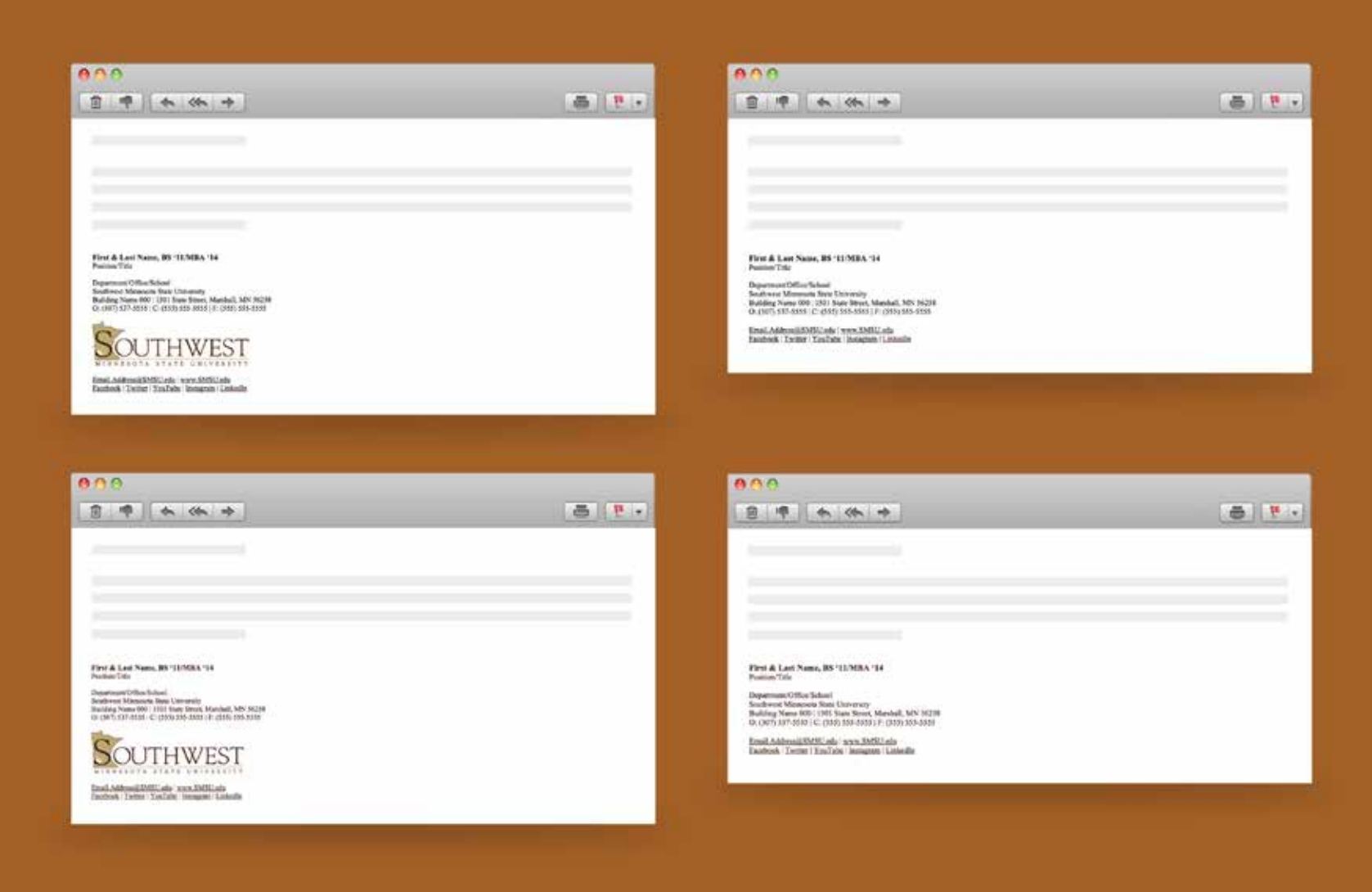
LETTERHEAD

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

Southwest
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Minnesota State

Southwest Minnesota State University,
A member of Minnesota State