



VOORHEES UNIVERSITY Communications and Style Guide 2025

Edition

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1. A Message from the President

Dear Voorhees Family:

In our continued effort to produce an accurate and consistent message to our constituents, I am pleased to introduce the Voorhees University Communications and Style Guide (2025 Edition). This resource is designed to ensure clarity, consistency, and excellence in all University communications, whether for digital, print, or in-person events. By following these guidelines, we uphold our mission, strengthen our brand, and present a unified voice to the world.

This document provides editorial standards (drawn from the Associated Press Stylebook), visual identity guidelines, processes for requesting communications assistance, and protocols for media interactions. Through collaboration and adherence, we will advance Voorhees University to the next level of excellence.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Hopkins, Ph.D.

President & CEO

2. Introduction: Brand Foundation & Core Principles

2.1 Mission, Vision & Values

Mission (Office of Communications)

The mission of the Voorhees University Office of Communications is to enhance the image of the institution through marketing, media relations, publications, event planning, and photography. We promote awareness of Voorhees to all target audiences via institutional publications, our website, social media, and WVCD 96.5 FM/790 AM radio station.

Brand Essence

Begin. Believe. Become. These words remain at the heart of Voorhees’s story, signifying the transformative experience that students undergo. We are innovative, student-centered, and forward-thinking committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2.2 Brand Voice & Tone: Cultivating the Voorhees Identity

Voorhees University communications should be:

- **Warm and welcoming:** We celebrate our community and encourage belonging.
- **Confident and aspirational:** We highlight student successes and institutional achievements in a forward-looking, visionary way.
- **Clear and consistent:** We use consistent terminology, style, and tone, referencing AP Style guidelines.

2.3 Office of Communications: Centralizing Your Message

Role

The Office of Communications manages internal/external communication and serves as the primary media contact. All University marketing materials, official statements, and major campus announcements should be coordinated through this office.

Contact Information

- **Phone:** 803-780-1195
 - **Email:** communications@voorhees.edu
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3. Visual Identity: Professional Presence

3.1 Logo & Seal Usage: Protecting Our Brand

Use only the official Voorhees University logos on any marketing materials, websites, stationery, and promotional items.

Primary Logo

- Vertical and horizontal configurations are available.
- Maintain clear space around the logo equal to at least the height of the “V” in Voorhees.
- Do not stretch, skew, recolor, or alter the logo in any way.

University Seal

- The seal is for formal usage (official documents, certificates, commencement programs).
- For general branding, the official logo is preferred instead of the seal.
- To request a copy of any official logo, contact the Office of Communications.

3.2 Official Colors: Our Distinctive Palette

Color	CMYK	RGB	Pantone	Hex
Blue	100, 46, 0, 0	1, 119, 193	2935	#0177C1
White	0, 0, 0, 0	255, 255, 255	—	#FFFFFF
Gray	0, 0, 0, 51	145, 146, 150	Cool Gray 9	#919296

Primary Palette: Blue, White, Gray.

Accent Colors: You may introduce accent colors (e.g., gold or additional neutral tones) to complement the primary palette, but Blue must remain the hero color.

3.3 Official Fonts & Typography: Ensuring Readability and Impact

Heritage Serif Options

- **Bell MT, Georgia, or Times New Roman** for official letters, formal events, and print materials.

Modern Sans-Serif

- Recommended for digital usage (e.g., **Open Sans, Montserrat, or Lato**).

Font Pairing

- **Headlines/Subheads:** A bold, modern sans serif (Open Sans Bold).
- **Body Copy:** A readable serif (Georgia) or sans serif (Open Sans Regular).
- Use consistent type hierarchy in brochures, websites, and documents.

4. Editorial & Writing Standards: Clarity, Consistency, and Inclusivity

4.1 Adhering to AP Style: Foundational Guidelines

Voorhees University follows the **Associated Press (AP) Stylebook**.

Key notes:

- **Dates & Times:** Abbreviate months with specific dates (Jan. 2, 2025). Use a.m./p.m. lowercase with periods (e.g., 9 a.m.).
- **Titles:** Capitalize formal titles before names (President Jane Doe) but lowercase when standing alone or after a name (Jane Doe, president).
- **Academic Degrees:** Use bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate. **Ph.D.** is used only after a full name (John Smith, Ph.D.).
- **Numbers:** Spell out one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above.

4.2 Inclusive Language: Fostering Belonging

- Avoid stereotypes and use **people-first language** (e.g., “student with a disability,” not “disabled student”).
- Default to **gender-neutral terms** when possible (e.g., “chair” vs. “chairman”).
- Capitalize racial and ethnic identifiers (e.g., Black, Indigenous).

4.3 Voorhees A–Z Editorial Guide: Quick Reference for Common Terms

The University maintains an alphabetical reference, included here for quick lookup:

- **alumni:** Alumnus (singular male), alumna (singular female), alumni (plural, mixed gender).
- **Board of Trustees:** Voorhees University Board of Trustees (formal). “board of trustees” (informal).
- **campus buildings:** Capitalize official names (e.g., Booker T. Washington Building).
- **classifications:** first-year, sophomore, junior, senior.
- **commencement:** Capitalize when referring to the official ceremony (Voorhees Commencement).
- **email:** Lowercase, no hyphen.
- **internet:** Lowercase.
- **logo:** Use only official logos.
- **media:** The Office of Communications is the only unit authorized to speak to the media on behalf of Voorhees.

- **seasons:** lowercase (spring, summer, fall, winter).
 - **telephone numbers:** Format as (803) 780-1234, Ext. 6 if needed.
 - (For a full listing, see pages 12–25 of the original 2020–2024 style guide.)
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5. Digital & Social Media Guidelines: Engaging Our Audience Responsibly

5.1 Website Content & Accessibility: Maximizing Reach and Usability

Web Content Style

- Keep copy scannable with short paragraphs and headings.
- Follow AP Style for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Accessibility

- Ensure text color has sufficient contrast against backgrounds (WCAG 2.1).
- Use descriptive alt text for images and captions for videos.
- Provide descriptive links (e.g., “Apply Now” vs. “Click Here”).

5.2 Social Media Conduct: Building Our Online Community

Voice & Tone

- Conversational, friendly, and inclusive—but still professional.

Approvals

- Official departmental social accounts must be approved by the Office of Communications.

Hashtags & Tagging

- Use hashtags relevant to Voorhees ([#VoorheesUniversity](#), [#nextlevelofexcellence](#)).
- Tag official accounts where appropriate.

Crisis Communications

- In emergencies, the Office of Communications (in coordination with senior leadership) manages official updates.

5.3 Radio Broadcast (WVCD 96.5 FM/790 AM): Extending Our Voice

- **Requests:** Submit radio promotion or broadcast requests at least **a month** prior to the event.
- **Live Remote Broadcast:** For off-campus events, a relocation/set-up fee may apply.
- **Approval:** All announcements or PSAs require approval by the radio station manager and the Office of Communications.

5.4 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Guidelines: Innovation with Integrity

5.4.1 Introduction to AI Usage at Voorhees University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are rapidly evolving and offer significant potential to enhance learning, research, and administrative efficiency within higher education. Voorhees University embraces the responsible and ethical integration of AI as a tool to support academic excellence and innovation. This section outlines guidelines for the appropriate use of AI by all members of the Voorhees community, including faculty, staff, and students, ensuring that its application aligns with our values of academic integrity, critical thinking, and responsible scholarship.

5.4.2 Principles for Responsible AI Use

All members of the Voorhees University community are expected to adhere to the following principles when using AI tools:

- **Academic Integrity:** AI tools must not be used to circumvent academic honesty or misrepresent one's own work. All submitted work must genuinely reflect the student's learning and critical thought.
- **Transparency and Disclosure:** When AI tools are used to generate or assist in content creation for academic or official purposes, their use must be transparently disclosed.
- **Critical Evaluation:** Users must critically evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy, bias, and relevance. AI outputs should be considered a starting point for further research and critical analysis, not a final authoritative source.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Do not input sensitive, confidential, or proprietary university or personal data into public AI platforms. Be aware of the data privacy policies of any AI tool you use.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Consider how AI tools may impact equity and accessibility for diverse learners and ensure their use does not create barriers.

- **Human Oversight:** AI tools are assistants, not replacements for human judgment, creativity, or critical thinking. Human oversight and responsibility remain paramount.

5.4.3 Guidelines for Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff at Voorhees University are encouraged to explore AI tools to enhance their work, teaching, and research, provided they adhere to the principles of responsible AI use.

- **Informed Pedagogical Use:**
 - **Course-Specific Policies:** Faculty should establish clear AI usage policies for their courses, including permissible and impermissible uses, and communicate these policies in their syllabi. This includes guidelines for using AI as a research tool or study guide.
 - **Instructional Integration:** Consider how AI tools can be integrated into curricula to teach critical evaluation, digital literacy, and ethical AI use.
 - **Assignment Design:** Design assignments that encourage critical thinking and cannot be easily completed solely by AI, or that require explicit AI disclosure and reflection.
- **Research and Scholarship:**
 - **Disclosure:** When AI tools are used in research, their role in data collection, analysis, or manuscript preparation must be explicitly disclosed in publications, presentations, or reports.
 - **Ethical Considerations:** Ensure AI use in research adheres to ethical guidelines, especially concerning data privacy, informed consent, and bias.
- **Administrative Use:**
 - **Efficiency Enhancement:** AI tools can be used for tasks like drafting communications, summarizing documents, or organizing information, provided the output is reviewed for accuracy and tone, and sensitive information is not compromised.
 - **Official Communications:** Any AI-generated content used in official university communications must be thoroughly reviewed, edited, and approved according to existing communication policies and approval

workflows. The Office of Communications remains the primary authority for official statements.

5.4.4 Guidelines for Students

Students at Voorhees University are encouraged to leverage AI tools as learning aids but are expected to uphold academic integrity and transparency.

- **Permissible Uses (with Disclosure):**
 - **Brainstorming and Idea Generation:** Using AI to brainstorm essay topics, outline arguments, or generate creative ideas for projects.
 - **Drafting and Editing:** Using AI for grammar checks, stylistic suggestions, or to rephrase sentences, provided the final content is significantly revised, understood, and represents the student's original thought.
 - **Research Assistance:** Using AI to summarize articles, identify key concepts, or suggest relevant sources (though all sources must be verified and cited by the student).
 - **Study Guides:** Utilizing AI to create flashcards, practice questions, or summarize lecture notes for personal study, *if this does not substitute for original learning or critical engagement with course material.*
 - **Code Generation (for programming courses):** If permitted by the instructor, AI can assist in generating code snippets, but students must understand the code, be able to explain it, and acknowledge AI assistance.
- **Required Disclosure:** When using AI for any permissible academic purpose, students must clearly acknowledge its use. This disclosure should include:
 - **The AI tool used:** (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.)
 - **The extent of AI involvement:** (e.g., "AI was used to brainstorm initial ideas for this essay," or "AI assisted in editing for grammar and clarity.")
 - **Placement of Disclosure:** This disclosure should typically be included as a footnote, endnote, or a separate statement at the beginning or end of the assignment, as specified by the instructor.
- **Prohibited Uses (Academic Dishonesty):**
 - **Submitting AI-generated content as entirely one's own work without significant revision or disclosure.**

- **Using AI to complete assignments, quizzes, or exams where the use of such tools is prohibited by the instructor.**
- **Allowing AI to generate content that directly answers assignment prompts without demonstrating personal understanding or critical engagement.**
- **Using AI to bypass research requirements by presenting AI summaries as primary research.**
- **Any use of AI that violates the Voorhees University Academic Honesty Policy.**

5.4.5 Enforcement and Support

Violations of these AI usage guidelines will be treated as matters of academic dishonesty or professional misconduct, subject to the relevant university policies and disciplinary procedures. For questions or guidance on appropriate AI usage, students should consult their instructors, and faculty/staff should consult with the Office of Communications or relevant academic leadership.

6. Media Relations & Marketing Policies: Amplifying Our Story

6.1 Press Releases & Blogs: Sharing News and Achievements

Press Release Requests

- Submit requests at least **three weeks** before an event to communications@voorhees.edu.
- Include 5Ws (who, what, when, where, why), supporting documents such as photos, quotes etc., plus a contact person.

Approval & Distribution

- The Office of Communications reviews newsworthiness, drafts or finalizes, then distributes to campus and external media.

Blogs

- Major announcements or features may appear on the University website's blog/news section and social feeds.

6.2 Advertising & Print Collateral: Strategic Promotion

- **Design Principles:** Use official colors and typography.

- **Consistency:** The Voorhees University logo must appear on all promotional materials.
- **Printing:** Departments are responsible for printing costs; the Office of Communications must approve design proofs prior to printing.

6.3 Photography & Videography: Visual Storytelling

- **Photo Shoots:** Arranged by the Office of Communications. High-res images are stored on the shared drive.
- **Requests:** For photography or marketing support (flyers, brochures, etc.), submit a request at least **three weeks** in advance.
- **Consent:** Written consent is required to use personal images for public materials.

6.4 Licensing & Merchandising: Protecting Our Intellectual Property

- Use of the Voorhees University name or trademarks on merchandise requires prior permission from the Office of Communications.
 - Officially licensed products must follow brand guidelines and maintain logo integrity.
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7. Communications Protocols & Procedures: Streamlining Operations

7.1 Mass Email Protocol: Effective Internal Communication

- **Critical or Time-Sensitive:** Crisis/emergency, threats to public safety, unscheduled closures.
- **Official Announcements:** Must come from the President's Office or authorized divisional leaders.
- **Target Audience:** Avoid blasting all-faculty and all-staff unless necessary. Segment your recipients when possible.

7.2 Media Policy & Authorized Spokespersons: Unified Public Representation

- **Authorized Spokespersons:** The President, Vice President for University Advancement, or Director of Communications.
- **Incoming Media Requests:** Immediately refer media to the Office of Communications before discussing specifics.
- **Media On-Campus:** All media representatives must be directed to Communications for credentials.

7.3 Communications Service Requests & Approval Workflows: Timely Support

- **Service Request Form:** Found in Section 8.4 of this guide.
 - Requests must be submitted **three weeks** in advance for press releases, photography, marketing materials, or event coverage.
 - **Freelancers:** In cases where the Office of Communications cannot fulfill a request, departments may be advised to engage freelance services (the department covers fees).
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8. Essential Templates & References: Practical Tools

8.1 Email Signatures & Voicemail Messages

Email Signature Format (Bell MT font recommended):

[Full Name, Degree Credentials]

[Position Title]

Voorhees University

P.O. Box 678, Denmark, SC 29042

Email: [Your Email]

Phone: [Your Number]

Voicemail Greeting

“Greetings! Thank you for calling Voorhees University the next level of excellence. You’ve reached [Name, Title]. I’m currently unavailable. Please leave a detailed message, and I will return your call at my earliest convenience. Thank you.”

8.2 Out-of-Office Auto-Reply Samples

Example 1

“Thank you for your email. I’m out of the office and will return on [date]. If you need immediate assistance, please contact [Name, Title] at [contact info]. Have a great day.”

8.3 Official University Documents (Business Cards, Letterheads, Envelopes)

- Contact the Office of Communications to request official templates.

- Always include the Voorhees University logo and correct address.

8.4 Communications Service Request Form

SERVICE REQUEST FORM

Please complete this form and email to vumedia@voorhees.edu.

Requests must be made at least **three weeks** prior to the event.

Requester:

Department:

Contact Info (Phone / Email):

Event Name:

Event Date / Time:

Event Location:

Requested Service (check all that apply):

Press Release

Website Update

Photography (headshots, new employee, event, promotional, social media, archival)

Videography (event, social media, archival)

Video Production (promotional, tutorials, recruitment, advertisement)

Official Univ. Statement / Announcement

Media / Press Conference Coordination

Development / Printing of Marketing Materials

Radio Broadcast / WVCD Support

Event Description:

(Provide who, what, when, where, why, how, plus at least one contact person for the event.)

Requester Signature/Date: _____

(Office of Communications Use Only)

Date Received: _____ Accepted by: _____

Date to be Completed: _____ Approved by: _____

Completion Date: _____

Conclusion

By following the Voorhees University Communications and Style Guide (2025 Edition), all departments and divisions can present a unified brand identity. Consistency in design, messaging, and editorial tone will strengthen Voorhees University’s image as we continue to reshape the landscape of higher education and reach the “Next Level of Excellence.”

For any questions, clarifications, or additional guidance, please contact:

Office of Communications

(803) 780-1195

communications@voorhees.edu
