designing for SOCIAL
Aimee is a graphic designer and brand ambassador for Michigan State University who considers herself fortunate to sell the most life-changing product on the planet - education. Her portfolio includes the Breslin Center concourse banners and murals, the award-winning MSU Viewbook and Admissions acceptance package, and the identity systems used by Campus. She appreciates green in all its tints and shades, loves to laugh, and is slightly terrified of those peel-and-pop crescent roll containers.

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Mike is a graphic artist at Communication and Information Technology. He provides design support to both UOE and MSU partners. Davis believes that design and the web are constantly changing, and that creative design and thoughtful solutions can communicate, inform, and inspire. He has a B.F.A. from Michigan State University in graphic design. Before joining UOE, Davis worked at Wharton Center for the Performing Arts.

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Why are you making this graphic?

- What’s your goal?
- Who’s your audience?
- What are you attempting to communicate?
  - Draft post text
  - Draft graphic text
For most people, your audience or message will drive your thinking on the tone.

But **how** does the tone change the graphic?
Hey, Spartans!
Air hugs, physical distance & “Go Green!”
Together, we will get through this.

Stay safe, Spartans!
Together, we will get through this.

Campus health & safety depends on all of us.

Formal campaign tone

Approachable campaign tone

Spartans stay 6 feet apart so they can stick together.
Spartans have always worn helmets. Today, they wear masks.
Sometimes, helping to save the world can be as simple as washing your hands.
How the tone changes the graphic:

**SERIOUS MESSAGES**
- basic art that uses the core brand colors

**PROSPECTIVE STUDENT WELCOME EVENT**
- make it fun and colorful, drive the hype

**COMMENCEMENT INFO**
- brand-focused, you may want a commencement image for immediate recognition, info could be in the post text while the graphic is used as the thumb-stopping content

**CULTURAL HOLIDAY CALENDAR EVENT**
- do your research on the celebration and align color/typography/messaging/visuals with the event you’re celebrating
What are you making?

- My first step for most projects is research
  - Explore how other departments on campus have marketed similar events in the past.
  - Search peer institution social media accounts to see how they’ve tackled the graphics on similar subjects
  - Find your inspo sites and bookmark them!
Never underestimate the power of a carefully worded Google search.
Pinterest.com

- Strong search function
- Mobile app = idea curation on the go
- Ability to curate ideas to be saved on project boards for future reference
- Boards can be made private
- Posts offer the ability to click off-site to purchase products/templates
Designspiration.com

- Similar to Pinterest
- Has a fun search by color feature
- Less practical, purely inspirational
Dribbble.com

- Anyone can look through the site
- Sign-up for an account to save ideas (invitation from a member needed to post your own work)
Behance.net

- Now owned by Adobe. It’s a social tool for the creative community!
- Strong search function
- Ability to curate ideas to be saved on moodboards for future reference
- Boards can be made private
- International presence!
Muz.li

- Owned by InVision (collab software)
- “Muzli combines automated curation with human discovery, to uncover the best design inspiration and news that you won’t find with a web search.”
Stock sites

- Strong search function
- Most offer ways to search between content types (photos, illustrations, video, etc.)
- Ability to curate ideas to be saved on boards for future reference
- Boards are private but can be shared with others on the project
- You can buy the art!
Ideas in the wild

- Bookmark the things YOU find fun to engage with on other social sites
- Allow yourself to consider the potential for a series of posts or a campaign to help drive engagement
- Never underestimate the power of nostalgia or content relatable to your audience based on age
But **WHAT** are you making?

You’ve allowed the inspirational juices to get your gears going, now you need to think through the product **YOU** are going to create.

- Does the tone or purpose of the graphic require it to include brand assets?
- Is this a photo? Does it include a text overlay?
- Is this an illustration?
- Are you able to make this a video?
- What about a GIF? Or stop motion animation?
- Is it playful enough to lean on a Meme?
what not to do with your WHAT...

Even if design isn’t your forte, there are some basic rules that will help make sure your messages will be understood.
WHAT to avoid...

Do your best to avoid situations where the post text and the graphic text are the same.
Today I had the honor of standing with @VP as she announced the Biden-Harris Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure, which brings us one step closer to achieving our Green New Deal for Public Schools.

We're just getting started. Let's keep fighting for our kids.

WHAT to avoid...

Use your post text strategically and avoid cramming text into your graphics.

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7:19 PM · Apr 4, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Congressman Jamaal Bowman via Twitter

Statement on Biden-Harris Clean Schools Initiative

"Our schools are the heartbeat of our communities and should become the epicenter of climate action as our nation tackles the climate crisis. Every dollar that goes towards making public school infrastructure more green allows us to protect the health of our kids and the world while supporting jobs in green energy and clean technology. This is a win-win for our schools and our future." - Congressman Jamaal Bowman

Today I had the honor of standing with @VP as she announced the Biden-Harris Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure, which brings us one step closer to achieving our Green New Deal for Public Schools.

We're just getting started. Let's keep fighting for our kids.
WHAT to avoid…

Pay attention to the hierarchy of information in your graphics and be mindful of how your eye is flowing over the layout.
WHAT to avoid…

Keep mobile users in mind and avoid using text that is too small to be read on smaller devices.
WHAT to avoid…

Memes are fun but they can get a little scary.
WHAT to avoid…

Pay attention to color contrast, alt text options, and other ways to be inclusive of others.
Your audience or message will drive your thinking on the tone of your graphic but how do you know when to weave in the new brand assets?

**Hint:** it’s never a bad idea to weave in brand. But how much will be dependent upon the reasons you’re making the graphic.
KNOW your options

Familiarize yourself with the brand site and the content available for download.

www.brand.msu.edu

Visual Expression

Our visual expression makes the MSU brand more memorable and meaningful.

A consistent visual identity creates a distinctive look that becomes recognizable and credible when repeated in communications over time.

MSU’s visual identity focuses on four key areas:

- Typography
- Color
- Graphic elements
- Photographic style

These design components may be used flexibly. Choose and use the elements that work best for your audiences and communications.
SIMPLE ways to weave in brand:

• Use the brand colors.
SIMPLE ways to weave in brand:

• Use the brand colors.
• Stick to the brand fonts.
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• Use the brand colors.
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• Mix in some of the new graphic elements.
SIMPLE ways to weave in brand:

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• Mix in some of the new graphic elements.
• Include one of the logos or your unit’s official signature.
SIMPLE ways to weave in brand:

• Use the brand colors.
• Stick to the brand fonts.
• Mix in some of the new graphic elements.
• Include one of the logos or your unit’s official signature.
• Align your photography with the style of the new brand campaign.
One **REALLY** simple way to weave in brand on social?

Use the brand tag!

Place it in the corner of your graphic as a way to include the helmet and an element from the new brand campaign.
MSU researchers are developing computer algorithms capable of detecting early warning signs of Alzheimer’s disease, thanks to support from a $3.9M National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant.

An MSU researcher developed four blueberry varieties, two of which are the most widely planted Northern highbush blueberry varieties in the world.

Building a better blueberry
A Spartan plant breeder perfects one of summer’s finest fruits for global consumption.
How to know when to go beyond **SIMPLE**:

- Is it a top-tier marketing effort for your unit?
- Will it be visible on a national scale?
- Are you being encouraged by leadership to align with the Excellence brand campaign more fully or weave in aspects of the Generation Will campaign through Admissions?
but... I’m not a trained DESIGNER

Now WHAT? (This is a tough spot.)

Step 1: find a design program or app that fits your need/skill level
Step 2: seek out templates and stock content
Canva

- Pro pricing: 12.99/mo.
- Platforms: Mac, PC, iOS, Android
- **PROS:**
  - 610,000+ templates
  - 100+ million stock photos/videos/audio/graphics
  - Space for 100 brand kits
  - Removes image backgrounds
- **CONS:**
  - Not as many fonts as others
Adobe CC Express

- Premium: 9.99/mo.
- Platforms: web app, mobile app
- PROS:
  - “thousands” of templates
  - 160+ million stock images
  - 20,000+ Adobe fonts
  - Reflow content into different social formats
- CONS:
  - Web version can run slow
  - Only 1 brand kit
  - A little clunky
Mojo

- **Pro:** 9.99/mo.
- **Platforms:** mobile-only
- **PROS:**
  - 400+ templates
  - Millions of stock images/videos
  - Fast image clipping
  - Animated infographics/text
  - Intuitive/easy to use
- **CONS:**
  - Mobile app size could be hard for some users
  - Not as many in-app templates as other options
Template tips:

• Go in with a plan - know your “why”, the tone, and text before you start looking.

• Consider how you might adjust color or type to work in an element of the brand.

• Think through how you would adjust the template to meet accessibility standards.

• Seek out a template that takes the visual hierarchy of information into consideration.
STEP 2: templates and stock content

You’ll need to know your file types and understand what files will open in your chosen design program.

**PROS:**
- Fair licensing terms
- Two ways to handle pricing: subscription or credit packs
- Variety of content
- Filtered image search
- Boards for storing ideas

**CONS:**
- Few templates for Canva
Envato Elements

- You’ll need to know your file types and understand what files will open in your chosen design program.
- **PROS:**
  - Offers ALL KINDS of assets
  - Includes hundreds of plug-in tools for other apps
  - Collections to store ideas
- **CONS:**
  - Licensing terms = the hook
  - Subscription can be pricey
  - Few templates for Canva
Other social content creators

• Example: yoursocial.team
• PROS:
  o Provides Canva templates
  o Style best for Millennial audiences
• CONS:
  o A little pricey but could be worth it if you utilize them regularly.

STEP 2: templates and stock content
Other ways to **get or create** content:

- Repost user-generated content
- Amplify content made by others
- Lean on your analog skills! Put that smartphone to use and photograph content you’ve made by hand.
GATE
Summer Information Meeting
Sunday, March 21, 2021
Online—12-2 pm
RSVP at gifted.msu.edu/GATEGSMU2021
VISIT LEARN DISCOVER

Discover all the learning venues and resources that MSU has to offer for preK-12 and college students.

visitlearn.msu.edu
now, let’s talk about…

ACCESSIBILITY

on social media
What is accessibility?

Accessibility is the practice of making your web content usable by as many people as possible.

It means making content usable for people with

- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Mobility impairments
- Cognitive impairments
So, is there a list to help me know what to do?
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 covers a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible.

It is the set of criteria that you should follow to make sure your web content is usable for the widest range of people.

At MSU the policy is to meet a minimum conformance level of AA

webaccess.msu.edu
But **WHY** make content accessible?

When you think about the audience you are speaking to the more accessible your content is the more people you can reach.

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are an estimated 2.2 billion people worldwide who have some form of vision impairment, and roughly 5% of the global population has a hearing disability ranging from mild to severe.

- Temporary disabilities from injury or a person's environment can also affect a user's ability to interact with web content.

- 71% of web users with a disability will simply leave a website that is not accessible to them.

- A 2018 survey of Facebook users in 50 countries found that more than 30% of people report difficulty with at least one of the following: seeing, hearing, speaking, organizing thoughts, walking, or grasping with their hands.
What do I need to make accessible?

- Colors
- Images
- Videos
- Audio
- Text
- Downloads
Color Contrast

• To meet Level AA compliance your text color to background should have a contrast ratio of 4.5:1

• The contrast ratio minimum changes for different sizes of text
Color Contrast

- The minimum ratio is different for icons than for text
- The contrast ratio requirement does not apply to logos

color.adobe.com/create/color-contrast-analyzer
Color Contrast

- Check [brand.msu.edu](http://brand.msu.edu) for more information about the MSU color palette and accessibility.

RGB/Hex accessible pairings

The following tool and diagrams help provide solutions to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are a series of recommendations for making the web more accessible. Regarding colors, the standard defines two levels of contrast ratio: AA (minimum contrast) and AAA (enhanced contrast). The level AA requires a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text (at least 18 pt) or bold text. The level AAA requires a contrast ratio of at least 7:1 for normal text and 4.5:1 for large text or bold text.

- [MSU Web Accessibility Site](http://brand.msu.edu)
- [Colour Contrast Analyser (CCA)](http://brand.msu.edu)

Quick reference guide to accessible colors

[ACCESSIBLE TINT RANGE ON BLACK](http://brand.msu.edu/visual/color-palette)
Color Contrast

- When placing text on an image, measure multiple areas
Color Contrast

- When placing text on an image, measure multiple areas
- Download a color contrast checker to your computer to check your content
Color Blindness

- Globally, 1 in 12 males and 1 in 200 females are colorblind
- Avoid green and red or blue and yellow combinations, as they’re difficult to read
- Don’t use color to convey meaning

Chromatic Vision Simulator: asada.website/cvsimulator/e
Sim Daltonism: michelf.ca/projects/sim-daltonism
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- Don’t use color to convey meaning
Describe your Images

- Add alt text to your images
- Don’t use “Image of...” in the alt text
- If you are using GIFs, add a description in your post text
Video

- If possible, add an audio description, subtitles, closed captions, or open captions.
- Alternatively, write a description of the video in the post text, or the video description area on YouTube or Vimeo.
WHAT are subtitles, closed captions, and open captions?

**Subtitles** are text that appears on the screen that transcribes the dialogue of a video into text. It can be used to translate dialogue into other languages. Subtitles can be turned on or off by the user depending on the production of the video.

**Closed captions** are like subtitles, but they provide more information to the viewer. Along with the dialogue of the video, they describe actions and sounds that take place in the video that may not be heard by someone with a hearing impairment. Closed captions can be turned on or off by the user.

**Open captions** are captions or subtitles that are embedded in the video file itself. The advantage is the captions are immediately available for a user and are available if closed captions are not an option. Because they are part of the video, they can be designed to match your brand. The disadvantage is they can not be translated or turned off.
Audio

- Provide a descriptive transcript
  Include a link to this file or page in the post text, or other related area
We work a lot to write in the brand voice, but there are a couple of other things to consider. Think about how someone will understand what you have written. Also think about how a screen reader will read what you have written.

- Write in plain language that is easy to understand, avoid jargon and technical language if possible
- Be clear and concise
- Be careful with Hashtags
- Be careful with Emojis
Hashtags

- Use Camel Case when writing your hashtags to avoid reading errors and to make it easier for screen readers

#SpartansWill
#spartanswill
Emojis

- Double check the description of an emoji before using an icon. It may change the meaning of your text.
- Do not use an emoji in place of other text or letters.
- Some emojis may not be available on certain devices.

emojipedia.org
Any file you provide as a download needs to be accessible. PDFs that come from Canva and Adobe CC Express will need to be made accessible. You can use Acrobat Pro to check your PDFs and fix most issues you come across.
Accessible Social

• A great resource that goes into more detail on all of this is accessible-social.com
QUESTIONS?
ask us anything