Naugatuck Valley Community College Website Style Guide

Draft One

2008-09

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Naugatuck Valley Community College Website Style Guide is a reference tool for content authors and editors to ensure the consistency of the college's online identity, for both internal and external viewers.

All programmatic content should be posted on the official College website. Personal websites should not use or attempt to mimic any of the branding or visual designs of Naugatuck Valley Community College (see "Policy for Web Content").

This Web Style Guide replaces all previously published standards regarding content publishing on the website. Its intent is to provide clarity and consistency as to best practices for writing for the web.

POLICY FOR WEB CONTENT

Before proposing content for the web, you should be familiar with the NVCC Website Policy Manual and topics covered therein:

- CCC system acceptable use policy
- Terms of use
- Privacy
- Use of college name and logo
- Links on our website
- Use of copyrighted work
- Accessibility
- Abandoned pages and dead links

COPYRIGHT

All pages on nvcc.commnet.edu are Copyright 2008 Naugatuck Valley Community College. Authors may only use materials for which they have obtained proper copyright permission. When in doubt, obtain permission from the author or creator. (see NVCC Website Policy Manual)

COMMENTS

This style guide will continue to be updated throughout the first phase of the Naugatuck Valley Community College website launch as the campus becomes familiar with the new site. Suggestions for improvement are welcomed and should be sent to contentmanager@nvcc.commnet.edu.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEW WEBSITE?

Before we begin planning and writing, it is important to understand why a more modern and user-friendly website is critical to our college's continued success in the community and higher education.

24/7 CUSTOMER SERVICE

There are approximately 970 million internet users in the world.

Having a website means that our college is open and reachable 24 hours a day – everyday – to any of those 970 million users.

Whether we like it or not, the college website has become our front line for customer service. We must offer a better website, therefore, that follows through on the college's mission and vision.

> **Our mission:** Naugatuck Valley Community College offers quality, affordable education and training in response to evolving community needs by providing opportunities to individuals and organizations to develop their potential.

> **Our vision:** We envision Naugatuck Valley Community College to be the first choice for cultivating learning, leaders and lives in innovative ways.

CREATING A BRAND FOR OUR COLLEGE

Every phrase we use to describe our College, every photograph we choose, every time we use our logo, we are creating an image of Naugatuck Valley Community College.

These verbal and visual elements introduce our College to those who do not yet know us and create the first impression of our College. For those who do know us, these elements reinforce the image.

> *Our brand image is drawn from everyone who speaks publicly about our College, publishes print or electronic information about us or represents us to the media. Everyone who touches student lives contributes to our brand.*

By articulating a consistent, clear message of the College's unique advantages using specific words, phrases and imagery, we will create a more consistent presence for our college programs and services in the community.

Our key audiences must be able to understand quickly and clearly who Naugatuck Valley Community College is and what the college can offer them. The promise we must communicate is:

The College brand relies heavily upon the consistency of the communication that conveys it. Inconsistent messages and experiences weaken or damage the brand. A clear message delivered by a well organized website

will ensure a smooth and effective experience for visitors. Anything less erodes a visitor's perceived quality of Naugatuck Valley Community College.

Our Tagline: The smart choice.

Our Slogan: Learning for every stage of life

UNDERSTANDING THE COLLEGE'S PURPOSE

Naugatuck Valley Community College is the smart choice for a quality, affordable education that will be flexible to your goals and needs, position you to continue your education, increase your marketability in the workforce, enhance your personal and professional skills, and network you into the local community during and beyond completing your education.

The keywords to remember are:

- Affordable
- Dynamic
- Flexible
- Convenient
- Collaborative

In more words, the college seeks to:

- Cultivate a well-rounded, disciplined, world-class education
- Foster independence and confidence in all aspects of character development
- Provide tools and insight for attaining and maintaining financial freedom
- Offer unique opportunities and meaningful experiences
- Integrate all students into a collaborative environment that supports both group and individual growth
- Give personalized attention to developing and ensuring the success of our students
- Prepare our students for a challenging, rewarding career and/or future in education

Reference: Appendix B, "College Facts," and Appendix C, "View Book"

IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

In order to create effective website content, we must first understand to whom we are writing. Because the college's services are so vast, it is important to remember the diversity and range of people that we're addressing.

All content should serve a purpose and be useful to this target audience. Keep the specific goals of the content and the needs of the target audience in mind when planning and writing web content. Audiences will vary from one content section to another.

<u>USING PERSONAS</u>

A persona is an archetype or 'stand-in' for a website user. It identifies the user's motivations, expectations and goals and brings the user to life with a name, personality and a photo. Although personas are fictitious, they are based on knowledge of real users.

> *Personas enable intranet and website teams to stand in their users' shoes. They focus the design effort on supporting user goals, rather than being driven by the ideas of team members or senior executives.*

In order to aid you in identifying and understanding your appropriate audience, the following twelve personas have been crafted for your web writing use:

1. Associate Degree Seeking Teenager
2. Baccalaureate Degree Seeking Teenager (articulation/planning to transfer out/credit)
3. Associate Degree Seeking Adult
4. Baccalaureate Degree Seeking Adult (articulation/planning to transfer out/credit)
5. Distance Learner
6. Enrichment Seeking
7. Non-Credit Entry-level Workforce Development
8. Non-Credit Professional Workforce Development
9. Parent of High School Degree Seeker
10. Business & Industry/Workforce Partnership Seeking (employers, hospitals re: affiliations)
11. Community-based Partnership Seeking (united way, big brothers big sisters, etc…)
12. Middle School/High School Partnership Seeking

Review the list of website personas that have been drafted for web writing use. Identify the relevant personas for your content area, write for them and consult people who you think embody or have regular interaction with those personas to verify that your message is being delivered clearly and effectively. There's no better critic or advocate than the source you're reaching out to.

Website Personas

PLANNING TO WRITE FOR THE WEB

Readers process information on web pages differently than on printed pages. Studies have shown that:

- 80% of people scan the screen for keywords or phrases rather than reading word-for-word
- Reading from a computer screen is 25% slower than reading from the printed page
- Readers do not like to scroll down through lengthy web pages.

Web text needs to be concise. Aim to cut equivalent printed text by about 50%.

REFERENCING YOUR OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OR DIVISION

Pick one or two ways to refer to your office, department or division, preferably a full name and abbreviation

Example: The Office of College Marketing (OCM) is on the fifth floor. Call OCM to make an appointment.

CHOOSING TOPICS

Step into your audience's shoes: You've just landed on the Naugatuck Valley Community College homepage… why are you here? If the only option you had was to 'search' for information, what words would you search for to find what you need?

Make a list of 3-9 items. These will become your **topic areas**.

ORGANIZING YOUR TOPICS

Once you have determined your topic areas, elaborate on each with 1-2 paragraphs of description. This will become the foundation for your **content**.

You may find that some topic areas overlap and should be combined while some topic areas are too broad and need to be split into smaller sections.

INFORMATION SPLITTING

Keep page length short without compromising depth of content by splitting information into multiple pages connected by hyperlinks.

The reader can quickly scan the page and select the level of information they want. The web is unique because it is interactive and it enables the user to move through the deeper levels for more information.

Each page should focus on a separate topic and be connected to other levels by links.

RANDOM ACCESS

Readers interact with the web and will quickly jump to another link without moving through a logical sequence of pages. Search engines can also deposit readers at any page within your site, or users may have bookmarked a specific page rather than the whole site.

Each web page needs to be self-explanatory and able to stand alone. Understanding the content of a page should not depend on a reader having arrived at it from a previous page.

Help readers who do not have the background to understand the page by linking to explanatory information.

CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF INCORRECT AND OUT OF DATE CONTENT

Incorrect or out of date content can frustrate and mislead users. If the content will be subject to regular factual updates, consider how those updates will be made and what resources are required to maintain that content. Be sure that the value of providing that content is worth the costs associated with maintaining it and the potential risks associated with providing out of date or incorrect content.

CONVERTING PRINT DOCUMENTS FOR THE WEB

Where possible, rewrite material for the web rather than duplicating what is already available in print. Aim to reduce the amount of printed information by 50%.

PDF files can be used where:

- you wish to retain the layout or integrity of a printed document such as reports, brochures or forms, or
- where conversion to HTML would take too much time

PDF files to take time to download, and the user should be warned of this, The maximum size of PDF files should be about 2Mb. Large publications can be split into separate downloadable PDF chapters.

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Web users prefer text to be short, concise and to the point. Aim to use as few words as possible to convey the message. Each word should need to be in the text. Remember web text is both slower and harder to read than printed material. It is better to provide short sentences that users will read than complex, lengthy sentences that they will skim over and ignore.

Use a variety of word choices, sentence lengths and sentence structures. Redundancy, especially in the form of long sentences, will ensure boredom. Try not to overuse certain words. If you get stuck, try to define the word, where appropriate, rather than stating it.

WRITING SHORT AND CONCISE CONTENT

Because web users scan information, the first line of each paragraph should contain the conclusion for that paragraph. Even further, the title for the webpage should be the conclusion for every paragraph.

This is called the "inverted pyramid" of writing: important stuff first – everything else later. (Newspapers use this technique).

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Use plain English and avoid complex language and jargon.

> Good: The Engineering Department offers both in-class and online courses, so you can choose the learning style that works best for you.

> Bad: The Engineering Department leverages flexible, engaging classroom techniques so you can get the most out of your educational experience.

Avoid the urge to be self-promotional. Use words to inform, not impress or persuade.

> Good: Broaden your range of dance skills in our master level courses, which are taught by internationally trained dancers.

> Bad: Our top-rated, master level dance instructors are highly qualified in a number of dance techniques and have performed and trained all over the world.

Avoid speaking in terms of "we" and concentrate on "you." There is a fine line between selling and bragging – people want to know what you can do for them, not what you can do.

> Good: You'll use the latest nursing technology available in our simulation labs.

> Bad: We have the latest nursing technology available in our simulation labs.

Invite interaction and participation.

> Good: Contact our admissions office at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or xxx@xxxx.

> Bad: Our admissions office can be reached by calling (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Do not use capital letters. They are hard to read and slow the reading process even further.

> Good: You can begin your career in less than 2 years!

> Bad: YOU CAN BEGIN YOUR CAREER IN LESS THAN 2 YEARS!

Do not bold or italicize whole sentences or paragraphs as they will dominate the page and are difficult to scan for important points.

> Good: By earning your associate and then transferring you can **save thousands in tuition** costs.

> Bad: *By earning your associate and then transferring you can save thousands in tuition costs.*

USING BULLETS AND NUMBERED LISTS

Use bullets whenever possible. Numbered and bulleted lists slow down the scanning eye and can be used more effectively on the web than in print. Use numbered lists when order of items is important, otherwise, use bullets. Try to limit items in a list to less than ten.

Bulleted or numbered lists can form part of a sentence or be a complete sentence within themselves. When the items in a list form complete sentences, they should be punctuated like this:

This is a list.

- We describe some circumstance.
- This is a different description.

Note that there is a full stop at the beginning of the list. Each item is a complete sentence so it has a capital letter and full stop.

When the list forms part of a sentence, it should be punctuated like this:

It is important to:

- identify something
- describe something else
- end with the last thing.

Note that there is a colon at the beginning of the list, and a full stop only after the last item. The items do not have capitals and there is no 'and' before the last bullet.

USING HYPERLINKS

Hyperlinks are easily recognized from their standard blue color and underlined text. Links embedded in text act as highlighted key words and aid scanning.

Only embed meaningful links as part of the text or they will become a distraction. Other useful links to additional information can be placed at the end or side of the page.

Avoid writing 'click here to view...' Instead, use the name of the page you are linking to as the link.

      Good: 2008-09 Academic Calendars

      Bad: Click here to view the 2008-09 Academic Calendar

KEEPING INFORMATION FRESH

Avoid using trendy phrases or currently popular colloquialisms, even when writing for young people. These will rapidly make your pages appear out of date.

Web users also want accurate and up-to-date information. You must regularly review and update information and statistics and check for broken links.

USING ACRONYMS

Acronyms should be used with great care on the website. Remember that many of your readers are not familiar with the language of higher education, and some acronyms that seem self-evident may stump your reader.

The best practice for using acronyms is to write them in full, followed by the acronym, the first time they are used on each page. Thereafter on that page the acronym can be used. Remember, readers can access the website randomly so they may not have seen previous pages where the term was written in full.

      Good: For more information contact the Student Government Association (SGA).

      Bad: Donations can be made to the NVCC SGA.

GETTING APPROVALS

If you want to include material written by someone else on your web pages, such as a report by another organization, you will need to get permission from the holder of the copyright.

If you want to include links to other sites, you may wish to check with the proprietors of the other site.

See NVCC Website Policy Manual.

PROOFREADING

Proofreading is essential to ensure the quality of any content being posted to the website. This checklist will help ensure that your web content is meeting the goals of both the college and your audience:

- Does the content solve a problem?
- Can someone viewing this page get the gist of the content simply by scanning?
- Do you provide links out to other related documents?
- Is it **good** content or just content?
- If the content mentions a feature, does it stress the benefit?
- Is the content user-focused?

All these strategies trick your brain into thinking it has not read the material before. This can improve concentration and help identify problems.

EXAMPLES OF USER-FOCUSED CONTENT

Here are some examples for how to focus your content on the web user while still flaunting all the wonderful things about the college. Keep this writing style in mind as you describe your area's own distinct benefits.

- As a student at Naugatuck Valley Community College, you will pursue your education at an affordable cost amid beautiful, safe surroundings.

- Naugatuck Valley Community College is a nonresidential public institution that is technologically fully equipped.

- There are more than 100 accredited programs to choose from at Naugatuck Valley Community College that lead to an associate degree or professional certification.

- Earning an associate degree at Naugatuck Valley Community College with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher will guarantee you admission into the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Universities.

- You have access to a diverse financial aid program and awards scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study opportunities provided through federal, state and private sources.

- Explore more than 100 non-credit courses that are designed to help you develop an interest or talent, sharpen professional proficiency or improve practical/employable skills.

- At under $2,900 per year, Naugatuck Valley Community College's tuition can save you thousands of in student loans while providing a seamless transfer into a four-year college or university.

- Come learn in our 100,000-square-foot state-of-the-art Technology Building, which brings all of the College's technology-focused curriculums together.

GLOSSARY

As a general rule, the College follows the Associated Press Stylebook (AP Stylebook). This guide is intended to highlight some of the most frequently troublesome issues and clarify style questions unique to Naugatuck Valley Community College.

As matters of style and usage continue to evolve, we will review and update the guide as needed. Please contact contentmanager@nvcc.commnet.edu with suggestions, comments, or any matters you feel should be addressed.

A

ACADEMIC DEGREES

Use "Dr." before an individual's name only for those people who have earned a doctor of dental surgery, doctor of medicine, doctor of osteopathy, or doctor of podiatric medicine degree.

If the person holds a doctoral degree in something other than one of the fields mentioned above, place that information after the name.

Example: Laura Hunt, who has a doctorate in psychology, will lead the discussion.

In non-story formats (lists, etc.), abbreviations are permissible. Check the following list to determine which ones do not require periods:

B.A.	bachelor of arts
B.S.	bachelor of science
M.A.	master of arts
M.S.	master of science
Ph.D	doctorate of philosophy
MBA	master of business administration
EMBA	executive master of business administration
MFA	master of fine arts
M. Arch.	master of architecture
J.D.	juris doctorate
D.D.S	doctor of dental surgery

Also note: It is bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree. Example: Wilson, who has both a master's and a doctoral degree…

ADVISER/ADVISOR

Use "advisor" in all instances (this differs from AP style).

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Articulation Agreements guarantee admission into any of the state university schools or UCONN after earning a 3.0 at our College. Stress the ease of articulation agreements. This is a major selling point, especially to someone who wouldn't immediately be accepted to one of the other universities.

B

BACCALAUREATE

Do not capitalize baccalaureate. It is synonymous with bachelor's degree. (see academic titles)

BUILDINGS

When referring to Naugatuck Valley Community College buildings, keep your audience in mind. For most on-campus audiences, Kinney Hall, for example, is fine in a story. If you are writing for an off-campus audience use the full name, Charles B. Kinney Hall.

C

CAMPUS

When referring informally to campus, do not capitalize the word campus: "Naugatuck Valley Community College campus," "main campus," "Danbury campus," etc.

The main campus is 110 acres in size. This does not include leased land such as the Automotive Center, nor does it include satellite locations such as the Danbury campus.

CAMPUS WIDE

Campuswide is not one word or hyphenated.

CAPITALIZATION

When in doubt, do not capitalize.

COLLEGES

Lowercase college when referring to a type of college rather than to a particular college. Always use a capital when making a direct reference to Naugatuck Valley Community College as "the College."

> Example: He said he plans to attend engineering college.

> Example: The College offers an engineering program.

COURSES OF STUDY

See "Majors/Courses of Study."

COURTESY TITLES

Refer to both men and women by first and last name:

> Example: Susan Smith
> Example: Robert Smith

Do not use titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss unless in a direct quotation or in other special situations.

In cases where a person's gender is not clear from the first name or from the story's context, indicate the gender by using "he" or "she" in subsequent reference.

D

DATABASE

When a database has been given a proper name, capitalize that name, but do not italicize it or place it inside quote marks.

> Example: The Library recently acquired the Century of Science database.

DATES

Remember, the order is time, date, place. (see "Time" for more detail)

> Example: The going-away reception is set for 2 pm. Aug. 30 at the Mainstage.

DEGREES/COURSE OF STUDY

Do not capitalize fields of study, options, curricula, degree areas, or subjects, except languages, unless a specific course is being referred to.

> Example: He is studying philosophy and English.
>
> Example: Each student must meet core requirements in biological sciences and liberal arts.
>
> Example: Our College offers a curriculum in digital arts.
>
> Example: She is planning to enroll in 'Introduction to Shakespeare' on Stage.

DEPARTMENTS

Do not capitalize the names of departments when used in text unless one of the words is a proper noun.

> Example: He enrolled in the department of arts and humanities.
>
> Example: He enrolled in the arts and humanities department.
>
> Example: He enrolled in the English department.

DOCTORAL VS. DOCTORATE

Doctoral is an adjective. Doctorate is a noun.

> Example: He is studying for a doctoral degree.
>
> Example: She already has earned a doctorate.

E

EMAIL

Do not capitalize unless beginning a sentence.

F

FUNDRAISING

Noun, verb, adjective — fundraising is now one word in all instances.

H

HEALTH CARE

Always two words - never one. As an adjective preceding a noun, it's hyphenated:

>Example: She was attending a conference in China that dealt with health-care issues.

HOMEPAGE

Lowercase, one word.

>Example: The redesign of the homepage took months of work.

HONORS

Do not capitalize the word honors, except when referencing the Honors Society or Honors Night.

I

INTERNET

Always capitalize.

J

JARGON

In general, avoid the special vocabulary and idioms of a particular class or occupational group. When it is appropriate in a special context, include an explanation of any words likely to be unfamiliar to most readers.

>Example: Students who register for the respiratory therapy program will spend a semester in clinical, where they will work in a local hospital as a caregiver under an academic supervisor.

M

MORE THAN

"More than" is the correct wording when dealing with numbers.

Example: Enrollment grew by more than 1,000 students.

N

NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Refer to the College as Naugatuck Valley Community College or the College. We are trying to move away from the corporate/ institutional sound of NVCC to foster a more collegiate identity to the college.

NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION, INC.

Also referred to as the NVCC Foundation.

O

ONLINE

The correct spelling is online (not on-line).

P

PHONE NUMBERS

Phone numbers should be listed in this format: (203)575-8000.

POLICE

See entry under "Public Safety, Department of"

PROFESSOR

Lowercase this job descriptor when it appears in front of a name.

> Example: The students' projects were judged by chemistry professor Jane Smith.

PUBLICATION NAMES

Italicize the names of newspapers and magazines in print, and follow AP style. For example, italicize the name of the *Wall Street Journal*, but not WSJ.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY, DEPARTMENT OF

The name of this department, like all other departments, is not capitalized.

> Example: The department of public safety recently hired six new officers.

PUNCTUATION

Use only one space after a period.

Q

QUOTATIONS

Use quotation marks for direct quotations and when citing a book title, computer game title, movie title, opera title, play title, poem title, album and song titles, radio and television program titles, and the titles of lectures, speeches and works of art.

> Example: "The school is a great asset to the community," said George Washington, director of admissions.

> Example: Students are encouraged to purchase "A Guide to Composition: Fifth Edition" from the campus bookstore prior to the start of class.

R

ROOM

Capitalize the word room when used to designate a particular room in web content.

> Example: Chemistry 101 will be held in Room 301 of Ekstrom Hall.

S

SEMESTERS

Do not capitalize "semester" or "term."

> Example: Registration is open for the fall semester.

STATE

Do not capitalize the word state.

> Example: The case will be reviewed by the state attorney general's office. Or: He was named citizen of the year by the state of Nevada.

T

TERM

Do not capitalize "term" or "semester."

> Example: She plans to finish her studies during the summer term.

THEATER, THEATRE

Our "theatre" department uses this spelling, thus its professors are "theatre" professors and students majoring in that field are "theatre" majors. Events are held in the Mainstage Theatre and the Playbox Theatre.

TIME

Use a.m. and p.m. with periods and lowercase letters. And remember, it's time, date, place.

Example: The going-away reception is set for 2 p.m. Thursday at the Tam Alumni Center. Or: The going-away reception is set for 2 pm. Aug. 30 at the Tam Alumni Center.

TITLES

Lowercase titles standing alone or in opposition.

Example: The dean of the School of Business must approve all research projects.

Example: Contact the budget director for further information.

Example: Nancy A. Smith, vice president of academic issues, will speak.

Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names.

Example: Vice President John Doe is in charge.

The AP Stylebook does not capitalize "professor" before a name, although Microsoft Word may encourage you to.

Example: The task force will be led by professor Michael Phelps.

U

U.S.

Be sure to use this identifier before the names of federal agencies when it is part of their name. This is necessary because sometimes state agencies have names that are identical to those of federal agencies.

Example: He received a $500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

V

VERB USE

Use the active voice over the passive voice.

Active: Dr. Brown will give a lecture at the meeting.

Passive: A lecture will be given by Dr. Brown at the meeting.

W

WEBPAGE

Webpage is one word, lowercase. "webpage"

WEBSITE

Website is one word, lowercase. "website"

Example: The university's website has a new look.

WEBSITE NAMES

In general, drop the *www*. For example, *MetaFilter.com*. Capitalize as the site treats its own name (avoiding excessive caps). For example, *CNet.com*, *craigslist.org*.

WORLD WIDE WEB

Capitalize World Wide Web. But: The shorter version, "the web," is lowercase.