

USU Web Identity: Standards and Guidelines

USU Public Relations and Marketing has developed a set of web templates that permits design flexibility while preserving key interface and institutional branding elements that complement USU's web identity.

1. About Web Identity

Every USU website contributes to the user's perception of the university. When a user visits the USU web, they take away with them an impression of the university and its departments. To ensure a unified web presence, official pages of the USU web should be visually consistent in order to reinforce usability and USU's brand identity.

With that in mind, USU websites have a commonly defined image that identifies each as part of the university. While originality and creativity are important, care must be taken so that differences in look and feel do not degrade usability or detract from having a consistent brand. Users prefer to see pages that feel like they are all part of the same website. This is why consistency is one of the best usability principles: if pages are the same, users are not confronted by potentially problematic or confusing changes in the navigation or the page layout. Instead, users know that the organization they found on previous pages will repeat in subsequent pages. Consistency is the key, not only to define a brand across USU websites, but also to make websites easier to navigate and understand.

As part of our branding strategy it is expected that all "high-level" or "cross-university" administrative offices will utilize the central university web identity in order to provide consistency of look and image for the university.

By setting up standards, the USU web templates ensure consistency throughout the website and help developers and designers in maintaining the USU brand on the web.

2. General standards

The USU templates are developed around the Bootstrap framework and custom styles (CSS) that defines the USU web branding.

These styles (CSS) primarily defines font family, colors, font sizes, columns and paragraph spacing, etc. When using one of the USU web templates, it is recommended to rely on the styles defined in this CSS file. Avoid adding new fonts, changing sizes, font colors, adding colors that may disrupt the USU web branding.

2.1 Typography

- The default web font is Helvetica Neue.
- Roboto Condensed (Google font) is also available to use in headings, banner image titles, etc.
- The default font size is 14px. Fonts sizes may be adjusted in some cases. Some CSS classes are provided for that purpose by the Bootstrap framework and the USU templates.

- If additional web fonts are used, care should be taken to select fonts that are highly legible and harmonize with the templates typography.

2.2 Colors

- USU's Aggie Blue is the university's brand color, and has the hex value #0f2439.
- The web templates CSS also provide a series of secondary colors (blue and gray) available through the following classes:
 - o .gray #f8f8f8
 - o .blue #4d5f80
 - o .blue-dark (#384660)
 - o .blue-bright (#2472b5)
 - o .blue-light (#d9dfe8)
- Some accent colors are also available:
 - o .brick #8c2d00
 - o .dark-brick #5d150d
 - o .error, .red #a94442

Additional accent colors may be used as long as they complement, rather than clash, with the colors in the color palette, and as long as they merge with the USU templates in a visually pleasing way. In any case, please consult with the university webmaster in the Public Relations and Marketing Office before adding any custom colors to the USU web templates.

2.3 Headings

Headings fonts, sizes, alignment, spacing, and colors are defined by the web templates styles and should not be modified.

2.4 White space and layout

The USU web templates uses type, photos, and other design elements with plenty of white space between them. Every section and component of the design avoids being too small and cramped. The layout grid (Bootstrap grid system) offers appropriate gutter spaces between columns.

Web page layouts should always be handled via the responsive grid system. Older fixed-width grids and layout methods should no longer be used since they do not display well across various screen sizes and devices.

3. Website content and publishing

Content is the most important part of a website.

The USU templates do not address what content should be published on a page and how that information should be organized (navigation) or presented (page layout). Units are responsible for the design and layout of all content (text, images, etc) on their website. Website managers should follow common guidelines related to navigation architecture, usability, accessibility, web security, privacy and copyright policies.

4. Best Practices

- Keep navigation consistent throughout your website. Users should always be able to return easily to your homepage and to other major navigation points in the site, including the main USU website.
- Divide your information into clearly defined sections, for example using headings and columns. Make sure these sections are properly aligned with each other, and that they are responsive.
- Use logical naming convention for page headers (H1, H2, H3, etc.), menu labels and web addresses. Always use proper semantic markup for your web content. Refer to HTML semantic markup for more information.
- Ensure that all images include an "ALT" tag information so that nonvisual users with screen reader software will have some indication of the presence and nature of your visual content.
- Provide contacts for site owners in the footer of your website.
- Links should be created using text that makes sense when read out of context. For example, avoid "click here."
- Understand the importance of search engine optimization (SEO).
- Do not embed inline style in your page. If you need custom styles, create a custom CSS file.