

Policy

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Sources/Links:

[NSU brand guide](http://northern.edu/brand) – northern.edu/brand

[United States Patent and Trademark Office](#) – Trademark Basics

[United States Patent and Trademark Office](#) – N NORTHERN Mark

United States Patent and Trademark Office – Wolf Head Spirit Mark

[SDBOR Policy 3:18](#) – Recognition and Funding of Student Organizations

NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Policies and Guidelines

SUBJECT: NSU Brand Policy

NUMBER: 5.3

1. Purpose

Northern State University's (NSU) branding officially and distinctively represents the university to all external entities. The importance of a cohesive brand cannot be overstated, as it signifies official communications, impacts public perception, student recruitment, retention, advancement and alumni development, e.g.

This policy provides on- and off-campus entities and individuals (listed in section 3.4) guidance to align with brand standards at Northern. This policy applies to logos, marks, graphics, logo lockups, and other brand conventions and standards within NSU creative materials that support Northern State University brands.

This policy relates to the application of United States and South Dakota trademark law and practice.

Northern's complete brand guide is available online at northern.edu/brand

2. Definitions

United States Patent and Trademark basics

3. Policy

3.1 Logos, marks and graphics defined

Northern State University reserves all rights to its officially trademarked (registered and unregistered) logos, marks and graphics ("NSU Mark(s)"), which include:

- Official logos
 - Spirit mark: Wolf head®
 - University seal™
 - Primary logo: N NORTHERN®
 - Former logo: nsu™
 - Throwback: Waldo™
 - Secondary athletic mark: N™
 - Thunder the Wolf caricature™
- Wordmarks
 - Northern State University™
 - Northern State™
 - Northern™
 - NSU™
 - NSU Wolves™
 - Northern State Wolves™
 - Northern State University Wolves™

3.2 Licensing

Communications and Marketing is responsible for maintaining and approving the use of NSU Marks. Northern has contracted with a third-party licensing agent, Nexus Licensing Group, to enforce trademarks, manage registered licensees and return royalties associated with the sale of licensed merchandise.

3.3 Do not change the logo, marks and/or graphics

Using NSU's Marks in a consistent manner is important to maintain the integrity of the Northern brand. Do not alter any NSU Mark in any way. Hand-drawn artwork is not allowed for resale without prior consent from Communications and Marketing.

Unless prior written approval is obtained by the NSU President, no NSU Mark may be:

- (1) combined with any other mark or element unless expressly authorized in writing.
- (2) used in any manner that could adversely affect NSU's image or would for any other reason be inappropriate for a public university. Such prohibited uses include, but are not limited to, the use of NSU Marks in connection with tobacco, drugs, alcohol, sexually-oriented products or services, firearms or gambling-related products or services.

3.4 Who can use official NSU logos, marks and graphics?

Subject to Communications and Marketing approval, NSU colleges, schools, departments, the NSU Foundation and authorized entities have nontransferable access to the Northern brand in connection with official university business, including but not limited to certain logos, marks, graphics, logo lockups, and other brand conventions and standards. This list includes:

- South Dakota Board of Regents (Primary logo: N NORTHERN®, Spirit mark: Wolf head®, University seal™)
- Academic (Primary logo: N NORTHERN®)
 - College of Arts and Sciences
 - College of Professional Studies
 - School of Business
 - Millicent Atkins School of Education
 - School of Fine Arts
 - Faculty Senate
 - Faculty sponsored centers and lectures
 - Campus departments, including but not limited to:
 - Admissions
 - Financial Aid
 - Student Affairs
 - E-Learning
 - Human Resources
- Off-campus media outlets for purposes of reporting on NSU or NSU events (Primary logo: N NORTHERN®, Spirit mark: Wolf head®)
- Athletic affiliates (Spirit mark: Wolf head®)
 - NCAA
 - NSIC
- NSU Foundation, (Primary logo: N NORTHERN®, Spirit mark: Wolf head®) including:
 - registered licensees
 - off-campus entities with memorandums of understanding and/or donation agreements

Any person or entity, unless expressly authorized herein, is prohibited from using any NSU Mark, including on apparel or giveaway items, unless the use of the NSU Mark is authorized by a license, memorandum of understanding, sponsorship agreement or written permission of artwork and one-time usage approval through Communications and Marketing.

Communications and Marketing, in partnership with the NSU Foundation and its licensing agent, is responsible for communicating and enforcing brand guidelines.

If contacted about a logo, mark, graphic or other brand element that does not meet this policy, stakeholders are required to immediately cease using the creative element in question.

3.5 Student Organizations

Registered student organizations recognized under SDBOR Policy 3:18 may use NSU Marks in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Permitted Uses:
 - Registered student organizations may use the Primary logo (N NORTHERN®) and wordmarks (Northern State University™, NSU™) for official organization materials, event promotions, and communications.
 - Organizations must identify themselves clearly (e.g., "NSU Student Organization Name") to distinguish from official university materials.
- Approval Process:
 - All merchandise, apparel, or materials for resale or fundraising must receive prior written approval from Communications and Marketing.
 - Submit requests via email to communications@northern.edu with mockups or descriptions of intended use. Expected response time is 5-7 business days.
- Restrictions:
 - Non-registered student groups are prohibited from using any NSU Marks without explicit written authorization.
 - Student organizations may not alter, modify, or combine NSU Marks with other logos or elements without approval.
 - All restrictions outlined in Section 3.3(2) apply to student organizations.

3.6 Unlicensed graphics

Individuals, groups and organizations can utilize, customize and/or alter marks and graphics which are not subject to trademark protection (unregistered or registered), which require no approval or licensing under this policy. Northern State University assumes no responsibility in determining the trademark status of marks not owned or trademarked by NSU or the SD Board of Regents.

3.7 Enforcement and Compliance

- Notification Process:
 - Upon discovery of unauthorized use of NSU Marks, Communications and Marketing will issue a written notice to the individual or entity via email or certified mail.
 - The notice will identify the specific violation, required corrective action, and compliance deadline (typically 10 business days).
- Good Faith Errors:

- First-time violations resulting from good faith errors will be addressed through education and correction without additional consequences, provided the violation is remedied within the specified timeframe.
- Repeated Violations:
 - Repeated violations or failure to comply with cease-and-desist notices may result in:
 - Revocation of future authorization to use NSU Marks
 - Referral to appropriate university disciplinary processes (for students/employees)
 - Legal action to enforce trademark rights
- Appeal Process:
 - Individuals or entities may appeal enforcement decisions by submitting a written request to the Director of Communications and Marketing within 10 business days of receiving notice.
 - Appeals will be reviewed by the Vice President of Enrollment, Communications and Marketing, whose decision is final.
- Questions or Concerns:

For questions regarding this policy or to request clarification on specific uses, contact Communications and Marketing at communications@northern.edu or (605) 626-2046.

4. Responsible Administrator

The Director of Communications and Marketing is responsible for the annual review of this policy and its procedures.

5. Source History:

Proposed by the VP of Enrollment, Communications and Marketing, 9/9/2022.

Approved by Executive Leadership Team 02/01/2023.

Revised 10/24/2025 to include student organization guidelines, contact information, and enforcement procedures.