

District Communications Quick Reference Guide



COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS



District Communications Quick Reference Guide

District Communications has prepared this guide as a resource to share the best practices our team uses in promoting College of the Canyons. It is designed as a helpful reference tool to equip faculty, staff, students, administrators, and volunteers with the information needed to effectively promote individual departments and programs, maintain consistency and accuracy in communications, and ultimately help all of us in our collective efforts to enhance the college's credibility, reputation and brand.

This is a working document that will undergo continuous revision and improvement. As a quick reference guide, it provides answers to the most common questions and information about the department's most frequently used services. For more detailed information, please visit canyons.edu/pio.

We appreciate your support, value your input, and look forward to working with you in your individual efforts to enhance the collective excellence of College of the Canyons.

Eric Harnish

Vice President, Public Information Advocacy & External Relations

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Our Departments

Public Information Office

Canyons Hall 255 • Ext. 3414
pio@canyons.edu • canyons.edu/pio

The Public Information Office (PIO) manages the college's communications with the community, including developing advertising campaigns, distributing news releases; coordinating departmental requests for print and digital marketing materials, such as flyers, posters, brochures, and banners; programming outdoor marquees and campus monitors; managing the online campus calendar; and providing photo coverage for campus events. PIO also coordinates the college's media relations, government relations, and emergency communications.

Valencia Communication Center/Mailroom

Canyons Hall 105 • Ext. 0

Often the first point of contact for new students and campus visitors, staff route callers to desired extensions, and provide answers to questions about college programs, services and events. They also answer calls to the Emergency Line (dial 7 from any Valencia campus phone), and coordinate with Campus Safety for proper response. The Communication Center/Mailroom manages the faculty, staff, and department mailboxes, distributing incoming mail, and processing outgoing campus mail.

Reprographics

Bonelli Hall 125 • Ext. 3325
reprographics@canyons.edu
canyons.edu/reprographics

Reprographics provides copying and printing solutions for a wide range of projects. In addition to reproducing tests, syllabi and other instructional materials, Reprographics prints everything from business cards to vinyl banners. They ensure that all requests are consistent with copyright law, and work to protect the district and its employees from incurring any violations, which can be costly and time-consuming to resolve.

Graphics

Bonelli Hall 116 • Ext. 3630
canyons.edu/administration/graphics

The award-winning designers in the Graphics Design Center develop print and digital marketing materials, including brochures, flyers, posters, and marquee announcements. Their work focuses on creating materials used for student outreach and recruitment and to highlight college programs, services and events.

Sports Information

Canyons Hall 255 • Ext. 3155
cocathletics.com

Sports Information works with the Athletics Department to promote the college's 17 inter-collegiate athletic teams, highlighting the achievements of student-athletes and coaches in the media, online at cocathletics.com, and through social media. Sports Information also produces more than 70 livestream broadcasts each year of Cougar Sports home games and matches.

Public Relations & Marketing Guidelines

The Communications Guide is designed to ensure that all college marketing and communications adhere to the highest standards of design and accuracy and convey the spirit of excellence that defines College of the Canyons.

The standards contained in this guide apply to all college communications to the public.

Marketing materials can be requested through the Public Information Office by emailing PIO@canyons.edu. College of the Canyons employees who choose to create college-related communications and marketing materials for extended audiences and off-campus distribution are expected to follow the standards established here. Please note the standards apply only to mass communications from the college to the wider community. Individual communications and instructional materials are not included.

All external communications representing College of the Canyons, including college logos, must be reviewed by the Public Information Office before distribution. This applies to materials created by college employees using online design software such as Canva, and to outside vendors such as web designers or video producers. This review ensures that all communications meet the highest standards of accuracy, design, and overall excellence.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Advertisements
- Banners
- Brochures
- Catalogs
- Event Programs
- Fliers
- Handbooks
- Letters
- Postcards
- Web Pages
- Folders
- Invitations
- Newsletters
- Posters
- Videos

Ready to get started with a project?

Need marketing materials or a review of marketing materials you created?

Have a question about something in this guide?

Contact us at Ext. 3414 or pio@canyons.edu, or visit Canyons Hall 255.

All marketing communications representing College of the Canyons, including college logos, must be reviewed by the Public Information Office before distribution.

Publication Requirements

All marketing materials created for off-campus distribution (print or electronic) should follow the standards in the District Communications Guide and contain:

College Logo

Displayed according to the specific standards outlined in this guide (page 12). Other logos can be included, but they must be displayed less prominently (smaller, in a lower placement) than the COC logo.

Web Address

canyons.edu must be used on all publications and promotional materials for College of the Canyons.

Photography Licenses

Photographs used in marketing materials must be properly licensed for the college's use. Do not use any image downloaded from the internet or acquired by other means without prior written permission from the image owner.

PIO Review & Approval

Materials created by employees outside of the Graphic Design Center must be reviewed first by the Public Information Office before production or distribution off campus. Please submit a Word document or PDF file to pio@canyons.edu.

Staff will review:

- **Content ▪ Syntax ▪ Compliance with bulk-mail regulations ▪ Spelling**
- **Compliance with copyright law ▪ Correct logo usage ▪ Grammar**
- **Adherence to college and district policies (including this guide)**

We turn things around as quickly as possible, but please allow at least 48 hours for fliers and brochures. Larger projects will require more time.



AI Guidelines for Marketing



AI tools can help brainstorm or generate concepts, but they are not suitable for creating finished professional marketing materials for print or digital distribution.

AI designs potentially violate copyright, do not meet accessibility requirements, and are neither press-quality nor editable. Accordingly, Reprographics will not print AI-created marketing material, and PIO does not allow AI-generated social media graphics on college accounts.

Issues with AI-Generated Material

- **Copyright** – There is no way to know the copyright status of AI-generated imagery, exposing the college to expensive infringement claims.
- **Accessibility** – AI tools do not create tagged text required for ADA compliance. The college can be held liable for not complying with these requirements.
- **Editing** – Most designs generated by AI cannot be edited, meaning they have to be recreated to make needed changes or future updates.
- **Poor Print Quality** – AI files are not print-ready and may print blurry or incorrectly.
- **Brand Inconsistency** – AI designs regularly distort or modify logos in violation of the college's brand guidelines.
- **Authenticity** – AI designs create images with fictitious students, buildings, and locations. Communications should accurately depict the college and its students.
- **Mistrust** – There is growing public backlash against the use of AI, so distributing material generated by AI can lead students, employees, and the community to question the college's credibility.

Bottom Line – While AI can quickly generate concepts, it takes more time in the long run to turn them into usable professional materials that accomplish marketing objectives and adhere to college brand standards. AI use should be limited to brainstorming or concept development, not to create finished marketing pieces.

Using AI for Brainstorming

AI can be used to help determine what information to include in a design, and to provide ideas for the general look and feel of a project. These mock-ups can be included in your marketing request to the Graphic Design Center. The text in the mock-up should be written by a human author, and not generated by an AI tool.

Media Relations

The Public Information Office coordinates media relations on behalf of the District.

This includes issuing news releases, and other official communications to on-campus, local, regional and national media outlets, and individual media members, as well as the logistical coordination of all media coverage and requests for information related to campus events and activities, and breaking news topics and issues.

To ensure that accurate, consistent information is shared with the media in support of the district's strategic goals, all personal, verbal, written and electronic communication with media outlets and/or individual media members must be coordinated through the Public Information Office.

- If you need help promoting an upcoming campus event or activity in the media, contact the Public Information Office as early as possible in the planning process. Advance notice of 10 business days enables us staff to most effectively handle your request. Please contact the Public Information Office at ext. 3414 or PIOdept@canyons.edu.
- If you are contacted by a reporter or someone identifying themselves as a member of a media organization, please refer them to the Public Information Office at ext. 3414 or PIOdept@canyons.edu.



Employee Name Badges

To order a badge for a new employee, or an updated badge for a current employee with a new title, please call PIO at ext. 3414.

Please provide: Your Name, Current Job Title, and Department

Given the space limitations on the badges, some people choose to include only their name and title.



Available Styles

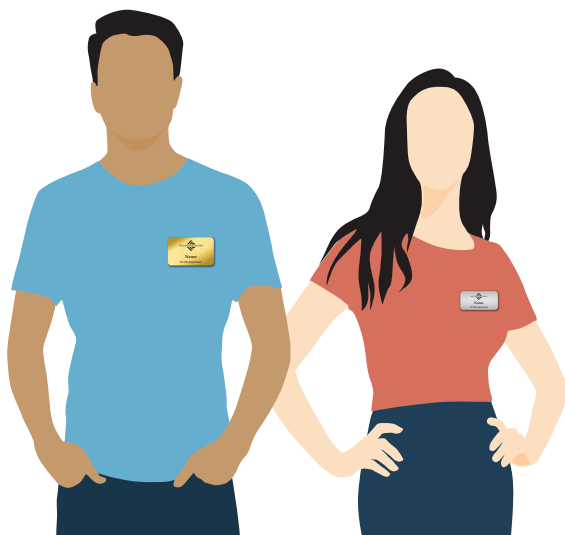
Brass Name Badge

2" X 3.5", rounded corner,
oxidized letters with
College of the Canyons logo.

Silver Name Badge

1.5" X 3.5", rounded corner,
oxidized letters with
College of the Canyons logo.

You will receive a proof to review and approve to ensure the badge is correct before printing. PIO orders employee name badges from an outside vendor.



Photography

The Public Information Office provides photographic services for promotional, marketing and archival purposes. This includes major college events, award presentations, athletic contests and other select on-campus events and activities in which there is an opportunity to acquire high-quality images.

These images are archived for potential use in campus publications, reports and presentations, as well as the college's social media channels and other internal/external communications, and routinely shared with media outlets.

PIO and Graphics staff also produce official employee headshots and department group shots by appointment only.

How to Request a Photographer

College staff requesting photography coverage should use the online form found on the PIO website: <https://www.canyons.edu/administration/pio/photorequest.php>. All requests should be submitted with at least two weeks notice allowing PIO staff an opportunity to carefully review the request and feasibility of coverage.

NOTE: submitting a form does NOT guarantee a photographer will be available.

Model Release Forms

A model release form must be completed by students photographed as individuals or those who are easily identified in a small group shot. Depending on the nature of the event, PIO staff will work with the requester to obtain signed forms prior to the event and/or bring forms to the event and ask students to complete them.



Posters of all sizes are ordered from the Graphic Design Center, with requests undergoing review by the Public Information Office. The Reprographics Center prints posters. Installation is handled by the requester.

Size: Posters are anything larger than an 8.5 X 11. Large-format posters are typically sized at 24 inches by 36 inches and mounted on foam core.

Ordering: Posters are ordered from the Graphic Design Center through their online form at www.canyons.edu/administration/pio/design-request.php.

Timelines: Please allow a minimum of two weeks for design and production of posters (24" x 36"). If you are requesting large-format posters mounted on foam core to promote an event, please submit your order at least four weeks before the event. This allows for two weeks of design and production, and two weeks of display time. We will do our best to accommodate requests submitted with shorter notice.

Installation: Please keep these installation requirements in mind for large-format posters:

- Hang posters on glass or metal surfaces using a removable hanging system like CommandStrips.®
- **DO NOT hang posters on painted interior walls.** Commonly used adhesives, such as duct tape, damage paint when removed and create unplanned repair work for Facilities.



Banners



Banners are ordered from the Graphic Design Center, with requests undergoing review by the Public Information Office. The Reprographics Center prints banners, and the Facilities Department coordinates installation in designated locations.

Please allow a minimum of two weeks for design and production of banners.

Size: Banners are typically printed on vinyl and vary in size, anywhere from 2 feet by 4 feet up to 4 feet by 8 feet.

Timelines: If you are requesting banners to promote an event, please submit your order at least four weeks before the event. This allows for two weeks of production, and two weeks of display time. Requests submitted with less than four weeks' notice will not be fulfilled. Banners will be displayed for a minimum of two weeks, and a maximum of four weeks.

To order banners:

Select A Location: Facilities maintains 19 locations on campus where banners can be installed. Before ordering banners, please call or email PIO@canyons.edu to reserve available locations. Departments can reserve up to 5 locations at one time for their banners.

Banner Locations:

1. UCEN Lobby 2nd Floor Bridge
2. UCEN Outside
3. Welding Fence (South)
4. Welding Fence (West)
5. Aliso Lab
6. Towsley (next to Coffee Kiosk)
7. Mentry Bridge
8. Bonelli Hall Stairs (facing Mentry)
9. Seco Bridge
10. Bonelli Hall (facing Honor Grove)
11. Student Center (left of doors)
12. Student Center (over doors)
13. Hasley Handrail
14. Student Center Dining Room
15. Parking Lot 5 (Practice field)
16. Parking Lot 8 (Visitor side)
17. Parking Lot 8 (Home side)
18. Baseball Field Fence
19. Student Center (right of doors)
20. Seco Stairway (facing Canyons Hall)
21. Career Services/Hub (East)
22. Career Services/Hub (West)
23. BaNC (Over Door)
24. CCC (Cougar Way 2 Post)
25. TLC
26. Student Employment (STCN)
27. Student Services & Learning Resources Center (CCSS Handrail)

Submit an Online Order: Banners are ordered from the Graphic Design Center through their form at www.canyons.edu/administration/pio/design-request.php.

Please include the location numbers of your banners in your order. This will ensure Graphics creates correctly sized banners, as each location accommodates different sizes.

Installation: When banners have been printed, Reprographics will notify Facilities that they are ready for installation.

Note: Please contact Facilities (ext. 3232) before hanging banners in any location not listed above. Banners hung without prior approval may be removed.



Outdoor Marquees

College of the Canyons operates four outdoor digital marquee boards. There are two signs on the Valencia campus (one of which is double-sided) and there is one on the Canyon Country Campus.

The signs run from 6:30a.m. to 10 p.m., 365 days per year. They are used to promote college events that appeal to a broad audience, display important information and bring attention to college services and partnerships.

Criteria for Posting

The Public Information Office develops and programs the marquees and prioritizes messaging that promotes the following:

- Events or programs hosted by, or in partnership with, the college
- On-campus events of broad interest to the community, such as job fairs, conferences, high profile guest speakers, enrollment messaging, Performing Arts Center shows, and other similar events.

No political or commercial advertising will be posted.

Timelines

Marquee requests should be made at least four weeks ahead of the event date (6 weeks is ideal). This allows for sufficient time for message design, programming and run time. Requests submitted less than two weeks before an event will not be accepted.

Content Guidelines

- Marquee messages are much like billboard content.
- Messages must be concise, are typically limited to event name, sponsor organization (if applicable), website for more information, dates and location. If you don't have a web page for your event, use www.canyons.edu/calendar. Make sure your event has been posted on the Event Calendar first.
- Messages are approximately 10 seconds in length.
- Messages will be left up for one month or until your event, whichever happens first.
- When the content is complete, it will be programmed into the marquee and you will be notified when it is in the message rotation.



Submit a Request

- Email pio@canyons.edu with your request. Include all important information (who, what, when, where, why).
- If the event or message is appropriate for display, we will edit the text to the essential elements and add graphics.

Monitors on the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses can be utilized for marketing and informational purposes.

To request an event or important information be included in the campus monitor slide show, please email pio@canyons.edu.

Submitting a Request

There are two ways to have your slide created:

1. **Ask PIO to create a slide for you. This is a popular option, so please give us as much lead time as possible!**
2. **Create your own slide in PowerPoint, or use Photoshop and save as a jpg. When it's complete, email it to pio@canyons.edu.**

Design Guidelines

The slide needs to be horizontal. We cannot run vertical flyers on the monitors.

Before you get started, view current content at one of the monitors and watch the full slide show to get an idea of what works before you sit down to create your own slide.

- Use high contrast backgrounds and text. A black background with red text is very hard to read.
- Monitors are like billboards - keep your text to the basics (title, day/time, contact info) with some sort of photo or visual. Use bold, easy-to-read fonts. Script-type fonts look nice up close, but are hard to read at a distance on monitors.
- Always view your slide once it is on the monitor. Sometimes what looks good on a computer screen up close may not be readable on a TV monitor mounted on a wall.

Important Considerations

- We do not accept requests less than a week before an event due to time constraints. Anything received less than a week before does not allow adequate time for design and programming, and enough run-time for the promotion to be effective.
- Slides can run a maximum of one month before being taken down in order to keep the content fresh.
- Slides are programmed to display for 10 seconds.
- Only one slide is allowed per event.
- If you have multiple events to promote, and need more than one slide, we maintain a 30-second limit per department. For example, if you need 3 slides, you can run them for 10 seconds each.
- Only certain monitors are available for campus-wide use, as some were purchased for and will be utilized by individual departments for their own messaging.



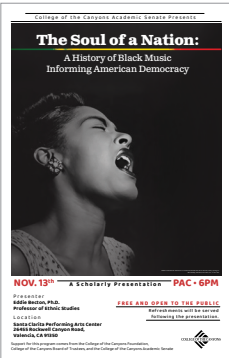
Graphic Design Center

The Graphic Design Center develops print and digital marketing materials, including brochures, flyers, posters, and marquee announcements. Their work focuses on creating materials used for student outreach and recruitment and to highlight college programs, services and events.

Working with the Graphic Design Center offers the following advantages:

- **Professional quality** – professionally designed materials communicate messages creatively and effectively.
- **Brand consistency** – materials align with college brand standards.
- **Print readiness** – files meet technical requirements for high-quality printing at Reprographics and with outside vendors.
- **Accessibility** – Digital materials comply with federal accessibility requirements.
- **Copyright compliance** – use of licensed images ensure compliance with copyright law.

To initiate a Graphic Design project, please fill out the design request form at www.canyons.edu/administration/pio/design-request.php



DIY Design Guidelines

Here are the guidelines on the types of projects that should be completed by the Graphic Design Center, versus self-created.

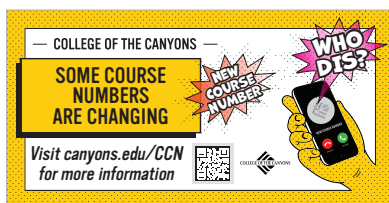
How to Decide

Submit a request to the Graphic Design Center if any of these apply:

- The material supports an **enrollment or revenue-generating activity** (e.g. enrollment marketing, event for which a fee is being charged)
- The event or message is **college-wide, open to the public, or formally sponsored** at the institutional level.
- The event or piece requires use of **the college logo**.
- **A large quantity** of printed copies are required and/or will be mailed
- The materials are **larger than poster size** (11" X 17")
- You have **complex design needs** (e.g., multi-page layouts, infographics, digital ads)
- The piece will be sent to on **off-campus printer**.

Self-created materials are OK if the piece:

- Supports an internal or narrowly scoped event (e.g. departmental meetings, club gatherings).
- Will be distributed primarily through digital channels (e.g. email, social media) and minimal print copies are needed.
- Is simple (single-page), and poster-size or smaller (e.g. 11" X 17" or smaller)
- Does not require the college logo to be used.
- Can be printed in Reprographics, and will not be sent to an off-campus printer.



DIY Design Guidelines

Common Project Examples

Project	Use Graphic Design Center	May Create Yourself
Social media graphic for department/program post		✓
Program brochure or flyer	✓	
Poster/flyer for club event		✓
Vinyl banner	✓	
24" X 36" posterboard	✓	
Individual class flyer		✓
Campus monitor slides		✓

Working with the Graphic Design Center

To submit a request to the Graphic Design Center, please fill out the form at www.canyons.edu/administration/pio/design-request.php.

Please allow at least two weeks lead time for routine projects, and more for complex/multi-page projects.

- Your completed form will be submitted to the Public Information Office for review. If there are no questions, a graphic designer will be assigned to the project.
- You will receive a first draft to review. It usually arrives within a week, though we may need more time depending on project complexity and department workload.
- The draft will be emailed to the address provided on your request form, and sent through Wrike, our project management system. Please provide edits or comments using the mark-up tools in Wrike; do not send changes via email.
- You will receive a second, updated proof to review. Please submit your final edits to the designer through Wrike. Given the volume of requests we receive, we can accommodate only two rounds of edits.
- Once the design is finished and approved, Graphics will coordinate with Reprographics for on-campus printing, or send the files to an external vendor for production.

Design Guidelines for Self-Created Materials

We recommend using Adobe Express for creating marketing materials. College employees have free access to Adobe Express through their college-issued computer.



Adobe Express

Using Adobe Express offers a number of advantages over Canva:

- A vast library of professional stock photography
- Wide selection of sample template designs
- Built-in accessibility checker helps ensure compliance with federal accessibility standards
- Easy to export files in multiple formats – PDF, JPEG, PNG, etc.
- Better results – It's easier to set up documents for printing in Adobe Express, so your copies will be more likely to match what's on your screen
- It's free – no pro subscription needed to access key features

Please note that materials created in Canva and submitted to Reprographics as a PDF will be printed as received. Reprographics is unable to update files to correct any issues with bleeds, cropped images, etc.

Self-created materials must meet the following conditions:

- Are simple in format, such as single-page flyers, basic emails, or informal posters
- Prominently feature "College of the Canyons [DEPARTMENT] Presents"
- Follow design best practices (e.g., clear layout, readable fonts, appropriate contrast)
- Comply with accessibility standards, including legible text and alt text for images
- Not use AI-generated images of people
- Printed pieces promoting events should include key information:
 - Time, Day and Date
 - Campus, building name (spelled out – Bonelli Hall, not BONH) and room number
 - Suggested parking location, and whether permits are needed
 - Website URL (or contact info) where people can get more information beyond what is included on the flyer
- Be reviewed and approved by PIO before distribution

Please forward materials to PIO (pio@canyons.edu) for review and approval before distribution. We will reply within two business days.

Questions

If you have any questions, or you're not sure how to proceed with your project, please contact the Public Information Office at pio@canyons.edu, or call ext. 3414.

Logo Specifications

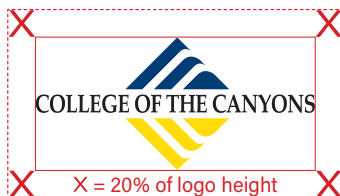
Primary Logo

The College of the Canyons logo is an important part of the college's brand. The following guidelines define specific details regarding its representation and use to ensure consistency and maintain brand recognition. All faculty and staff must follow these guidelines when the college logo is used in any communications medium.



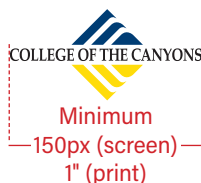
Exclusion Zone

It is crucial to maintain this clear minimum space to allow enough breathing room around the logo. The exclusion zone ensures optimal visibility.



Sizing

To ensure easy readability, we recommend you do not scale any smaller than 150 pixels or 1" width. This is the minimum size as going smaller may compromise the readability and visibility.



Backgrounds

The logo may be reproduced in white against a solid or screened color background. To ensure legibility, background color should be dark enough to achieve good contrast.



Incorrect Usages

Handle the logo with care. Here are examples of what not to do with the logo.



Do not change the arrangement or scale of the logo



Do not rotate the logo



Do not stretch or alter any part of the logo



Do not add a stroke to the logo



Do not apply a drop shadow



Do not blur the logo



Do not alter the opacity of the logo



Do not change the colors of the logo



Do not change the logo font

Approved Colors



College of the Canyons Blue
Pantone 541 C
RGB: 0/61/120
CMYK: 100/61/0/43
Hex #003d78



College of the Canyons Yellow
Pantone 116 C
RGB: 255/207/0
CMYK: 0/10/98/0
Hex #ffcf00

Department and Program Logos

Cougar Logos

Only use the following logos for College of the Canyons Athletics communications:



College of the Canyons Athletics Logo



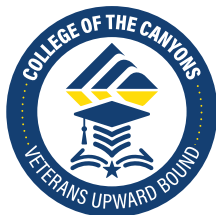
College of the Canyons Cougar Logo.
The approved Cougar logo may be used for other college communications.

The following cougar logos have been retired and are no longer in use. **Do not** use them in any college publications.



Department and Program Logos

To ensure that individual departments and programs can represent themselves in a manner consistent with the college's branding guidelines, the Graphics Department has created visual representation that uses the college logo mark and identifies the individual department.



College of the Canyons
Pharmacy Technology



College of the Canyons
Recreation Management

The Public Information Office manages official college profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, TikTok and LinkedIn. Individual departments are welcome to create and maintain their own social media accounts if a permanent COC employee maintains access and oversight.

Should you not have the time or resources to maintain your own social media presence, consider reaching out to pio@canyons.edu to have your event or information posted on the college's accounts instead.

Things to consider when setting up your own department social media:

- All paid social media (including boosted posts) need to be run through the PIO department. Contact pio@canyons.edu for paid advertising needs.
- Most social media platforms allow you to use the name of your department or club rather than having to use the name of an individual.
 - The exception to this is Facebook. You will need to create a PROFILE in order to manage your PAGE. We do not recommend you attach your personal profile but rather create a "dummy" profile to use to manage your page.
- Choose a name for your social media profile that will make it easy for students to find. Try to incorporate "College of the Canyons" into the name because that is what students typically search for on social media. For example, *College of the Canyons – Counseling*, or *College of the Canyons, Counseling*.
- Managing your social media presence is an on-going process. Regularly monitor your accounts for questions or inappropriate comments. Refrain from censoring dissenting opinions but delete any comments that call out specific employees, provide personal information about someone, or include hate speech. Feel free to contact the PIO office for guidance should you come across a questionable comment.
- The COC logo and district seal should NOT be used as the account profile picture. Consider using a department logo, photo of the campus or department, or something that highlights the department you are representing.
- Photos taken at events or in the department can be used on your social media. However, all paid advertising requires that anyone identifiable in a post must have a subject release on file. You can request a subject release form from pio@canyons.edu.

Should you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, feel free to email PIO@canyons.edu or call 661-362-3414.





ACCESSIBILITY



Accessibility is a key component of inclusivity at College of the Canyons. As articulated in our Mission Statement, our commitment to inclusion supports an environment where all students can achieve their educational goals. Moreover, we strive to fully include all who engage with us by ensuring that communications and content are accessible to everyone.

Accessibility isn't optional. It's a mandatory mindset and practice.

Accessibility has many components and covers a range of topics that are too vast to include here. For the purposes of this guide, we will focus on some of the most common accessibility-related issues for digital communications. We encourage you to be mindful of accessibility across the entire range of media as communication trends and platforms evolve.

Context

An estimated 13 percent of Americans have a disability, according to the American Community Survey. That's more than 42 million people. Inaccessible content can exclude people just as much as steps can prevent someone with a physical disability from entering a building. Inaccessible content denies them equal access to information, which many courts have ruled is a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is complicated and legally murky, but its intent and spirit – to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else – aligns with the College of the Canyons mission of inclusivity.

Section 508

Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires electronic content to be accessible to people with disabilities. It also sets the accessibility standards for websites and other digital communication tools and content, known as information communication technology (ICT). Section 508 was not part of the original Rehabilitation Act of 1973 but was added later with a 1998 update to include accessibility requirements for all information technology.

LEARN MORE – For more details on Section 508, or to obtain specific guidance on best accessibility practices, please visit www.canyons.edu/comsguide.

Access Methods

People with disabilities access digital content and navigate the web in a variety of ways:

- People who are blind or sight-impaired may use screen readers, which are devices that read aloud the text that appears on a screen, or screen magnifiers, both physical and software-based.
 - **CONSIDER THIS** – Textual information in a flier displayed as an image has no actual text that a screen reader can recognize.
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing may rely on captioning or transcripts. Videos should be captioned, and transcripts should be provided for audio content. See VIDEO & AUDIO (page 19-20).
- People with mobility impairments may not be able to use a mouse, may rely on head pointers to interact with computers, or may require voice-recognition software to control their computers and devices with verbal commands.
- People with a wide range of cognitive impairments experience a common set of functional issues that can be minimized by providing them:
 - Easily understood content using plain language.
 - A clear focus on important content with minimal distractions.
 - Logical, consistent design and layout of documents.
 - Intuitive, consistent layout and navigation of websites and online content.

Accessibility Helps Everyone

Accessible content can also help people without disabilities who are temporarily impaired or in situations that limit their abilities. For example, video captions are useful in noisy environments where it's difficult to hear, or in quiet environments where playing audio out loud is not appropriate.

While accessible communications are crucial for people with disabilities, they are beneficial for everyone.

Accessibility

Writing

The foundation of an accessible document is content that clearly and concisely conveys your message. This information applies not only to digital documents and content, but to all communications in its various forms.

General Guidelines

- More copy is not necessarily better, so eliminate unnecessary content that doesn't get your message across.
- Don't get overly technical, avoid jargon, and provide definitions of institutional-specific terms that cannot be avoided.
- Acronyms and abbreviations may be ubiquitous at College of the Canyons, but they are not necessarily decipherable by external audiences.

Examples:

POOR – *The orientation meeting will be held in BONH-106.*

GOOD – *The orientation will be held in Room 106 of Bonelli Hall.*

FYI – The naming convention for college buildings is the result of a technical limitation on the number of characters that can be used in our information systems. While acceptable in bulk listings such as the schedule of classes, use of these abbreviations in marketing material can be confusing to external audiences. Building names should be written out.

POOR – *The PAC celebrates its 20th anniversary this season.*

GOOD – *The performing arts center celebrates its 20th anniversary this season.*

Documents

Most Microsoft 365/Office and related applications have accessibility features and settings that, if used correctly, produce accessible PDFs that can be shared electronically. Resolving PDF accessibility issues in Adobe Acrobat is more challenging and time-consuming than simply addressing the issues in the source application and exporting a new PDF.

TIP – In Microsoft 365/Office applications, search for **Accessibility Checker** or **Accessibility Assistant** for step-by-step guidance on setting up your document with accessibility in mind.

General Guidelines

- Proper document structure utilizing headings, lists, and other element markups allows screen reader users to navigate content logically and efficiently.
- Become familiar with the application's accessibility features.
- Images and other visual elements require alt text. See ALT TEXT (page 18).
- Body text should be large enough (generally 12- to 14-point type) for people to read.
- Line spacing should be 1.5 or 2.0 whenever possible.
- Page margins should be no less than 0.5" on all sides (1.0" is preferable).
- Left-aligned text is easiest to read. Center-aligned text should be used sparingly.

- Do not write sentences in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. They are harder to read. Limit the use of all-caps to sub headers and brief headings.
- Use styles such as italics, bold, and underline selectively, and avoid using them for entire paragraphs.

RULE OF THUMB – Do not underline words unless they are hyperlinks.

- Use enough contrast between text and background to ensure readability.
- Avoid using backgrounds that make overlay text hard to read.

RULE OF THUMB – Use text over solid or subtly textured backgrounds rather than images or patterns. Adequate contrast still applies.

Online Design

The proliferation of online graphic design platforms has simplified the design process, making it easy for anyone to create professional-looking marketing material with predesigned templates. But users should not assume that material generated by these services meets accessibility standards. Care should be taken to ensure that the template is accessible, and that subsequent edits and additions follow accessibility guidelines and practices.

Email

When sending mass email communications, ensure any important information in attached or embedded images is also included as text in the email, as screen readers cannot read text in images.

Color Contrast

Color contrast is key to legibility and accessibility. Whether you're creating a PDF, an event poster, or designing a web page, it's important to consider readability. Color combinations, reverse type, and type overlays can be challenging from an accessibility standpoint.

Contrast Ratio

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) require a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text to achieve minimum compliance. Large text is defined as 14 point (typically 18.66px) and bold or larger, or 18 point (typically 24px) or larger.

TIP – Don't use color as the only way to convey information. Use text or an icon as well.

Checking Compliance

For websites and online media, use a web-based color contrast checker to check accessibility compliance. Color and link contrast checkers are available at no charge from WebAIM.

- Color Contrast Checker – <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- Link Contrast Checker – <https://webaim.org/resources/linkcontrastchecker/>
- Chrome Extension – The WCAG Color contrast checker is available as a free extension to the Chrome web browser. Visit the Chrome Web Store to install it.

Accessibility

Accessible Palettes

Color Safe provides accessible color palettes based on WCAG guidelines of text and background color ratios. Visit <http://colorsafe.co/>.

Alt Text

All non-decorative images must be accompanied by a written description known as equivalent alternative text, more commonly referred to as alt text. Alt text is a description of an image that is read aloud to visually impaired users via a screen reader. Write alt text as if you were describing the visual scene of the image to someone over the phone. Tell them what you see, concisely.

General Guidelines

- Limit alt text to no more than 125 characters, or 250 characters for grouped images such as collages.
- Avoid filler words such as “this is a photo of.”
- If the image consists primarily of embedded text, that text should be used verbatim as the alt text.
- If an image is used to provide direction or guide the user (such as an arrow), the alt text should guide the user in the same direction.

POOR: *The Canyon Country campus.*

GOOD: *A colorful dusk sky illuminates the Canyon Country campus and surrounding hills in this aerial view of the Takeda Science Center and Student Services & Learning Resources Center.*



Alt Text for Social Media

You can add alt text to images in social media posts using each platform's edit or advanced settings feature.

X (Twitter) – Follow these steps to enter alt text for images:

1. Click the **Post compose** button.
2. Attach your photo(s).
3. Click **Add description**.
4. Type your description of the image and click **Done**.
5. Descriptions can be added for each image in a post.

Facebook – Follow these steps to edit alt text for images:

1. Click **Photo/Video** at the top of your Feed.
2. Select the photo you want to add.
3. Hover over the photo and click **Edit**.
4. Click **Alternative text** in the menu on the left side.

5. The automatically generated text will be shown on the left side of your photo. Click **Override generated alt text** to edit it.
6. Write your alt text in the box. To change back to the automatically generated text, click **Clear**.
7. Click **Save** at bottom left.

Instagram – Follow these steps to edit alt text for images **before** you post:

1. Upload an existing photo.
2. Choose a filter and edit the image, then click **Next**.
3. Click **Accessibility**, then write alt text in the box.
4. Click **Share** to post.

Follow these steps to change the alt text of a photo **after** you post:

1. Above your photo or video, click **...**.
2. Click **Edit**.
3. Click **Accessibility**, then write the alt text in the box.
4. Click **Done** to save changes.

LinkedIn – Follow these steps to add or edit alt text for images:

1. Uploading your image.
2. Click **Alt.text** below image.
3. Enter your alt text.
4. Click **Save**.

Video & Audio

Just as alt text provides context for images, video captioning and audio transcripts help make media accessible to people with visual or auditory impairments.

Captioning

Videos must be captioned to be accessible. There are two types of captions: open and closed. Open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off, whereas closed captions can be turned on and off by the viewer. You can caption a video yourself with a free caption-editing tool, use a paid service provider, or utilize platform-specific captioning tools.

YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo

YouTube, Facebook and Vimeo support closed captioning, so open captioning is not necessary. It's important to proofread and correct the closed caption file before publishing and promoting your video, as auto-generated caption files often contain misspellings and errors.

Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn

Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn do not support closed captioning. Open captioning is required for accessibility compliance. Please refer to the specific platform for instructions on creating and loading open captions.

Accessibility

Transcripts

Transcripts convert audio into readable text. However, transcripts exist in a separate scrollable document instead of time-coded text in a video.

Transcript Tips

- Convert your audio to captions using a caption-editing tool or service.
- Most caption-editing tools include the ability to export a transcript.
- Transcripts should include all audio, on-screen text, and any necessary visual information.

Websites

The content management system for the College of the Canyons website will dictate most of the layout and design elements for any given page, but there are still issues you should be aware of when creating, updating, or editing a page.

- Do not write sentences in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. They are more difficult to read. All-caps are acceptable in limited circumstances, such as short page or section headers, but it's generally best to avoid them whenever possible.
- Do not underline words unless they are hyperlinks.
- Avoid applying a bold style to words for emphasis. These can also be mistaken for hyperlinks.
- Follow a logical content hierarchy: Page Title, Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, Paragraph/Body Text, etc. Headings should be used in numerical order starting at the top of the page (e.g. Heading 1 cannot follow Heading 2 or 3).

NOTE – The actual naming of these elements may be different after an anticipated transition to a new content management system.

- Provide page titles, descriptions, and keywords in page settings.
- Provide appropriate alt text and titles for images.
- Provide appropriate descriptions for hyperlinks.

Additional Resources

WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind)

- <https://webaim.org/>

WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool

- <https://wave.webaim.org/>

Creating Accessible Digital Products

- <https://www.section508.gov/create/>

COC Information Technology

- <https://www.canyons.edu/administration/it/resources/accessibility/index.php>

Publications produced at College of the Canyons generally adhere to the rules outlined in the *Associated Stylebook* and *Webster's Dictionary*. The following guidelines are for common usages at College of the Canyons.

acronyms – Use acronyms only on second reference after the proper name has been stated. *Example: The Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) offers training in advanced technologies for local businesses. CACT staff are available for consultation to evaluate your training needs.*

academic degrees – Associate of Arts degree, or associate degree (no apostrophe in either usage). Bachelor of Arts degree, or bachelor's degree. Master of Arts degree, or master's degree. Doctor of Philosophy, or doctorate degree.

campuswide – use as one word

college – lowercase when used as a single word. *Example: The college is located in Santa Clarita.*

districtwide – use as one word

email – lower case, no hyphen

numbers – Spell out at the beginning of a sentence. *Example: Five years ago, College of the Canyons added new programs and services.* Spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and above. Spell out first through ninth.

Office – Capitalize when used as part of a proper name. *Example: The Counseling Office will be open for additional hours this week.* Use lower case in general references. *Several faculty offices are located across the hall.*

online – one word, lower case, no hyphen

Santa Clarita Community College District (SCCCD) – Primarily used in legal or regulatory documents, or when referring to the entire district. Lowercase district when used as a single word. *Example: The district service area is more than 350 square miles.*

toward – not towards; no 's'

web – lower case

web page – two words, lower case

website – one word, lower case



Santa Clarita Community College District

Dr. Edel Alonso • Mr. Fred K. Arnold • Dr. Carlos R. Guerrero
Ms. Sharlene R. Johnson • Ms. Darlene Trevino