

Norfolk State University Brand Roll Out

On August 15, 2017, Norfolk State University formally unveiled its new institutional brand, tagline and logo. It was the culmination of two years of research among the University's top constituencies as well as the greater community via surveys and focus groups. Since its opening in 1935, Norfolk State had never had a bonafide brand — one that was researched and developed based on what was learned.

The new brand, developed by the university's Office of Communications and Marketing and its marketing and public relations partner, Fuselideas, was the culmination of an 18-month journey of research including feedback from more than 300 stakeholders. Our primary research, included interviews and focus groups made up of alumni, students, prospective students, parents, faculty, staff, senior leadership, the Board of Visitors and the community.

Using this primary research methodology, it was determined that Norfolk State lacked brand clarity, was not well differentiated in the educational marketplace and was a well-kept secret, among other findings. However, the research also indicated such important jewels as the feedback from alumni and students who frequently identify their Norfolk State experience as life changing and that a key to their experience is working with faculty who recognized their full potential, and challenged and supported them to help them achieve.

This knowledge became the foundation for the new brand positioning statement and key messages. Our strategy was to communicate clear, authentic and consistent messages about the University in every facet of the public arena.

Additionally, Norfolk State wanted to raise awareness about the profound impact that the University has on its students, community and the world around us. The goal was also to differentiate Norfolk State from all the other institutions using "NSU" by incorporating our full name — Norfolk State University into the logo.

Through secondary research — articles and case study reviews, such as Fast Company Magazine, Coke a Cola, IBM, Walmart and other legacy companies — we determined that a rolling launch was the best strategy to undertake. According to [Fast Company](#), one way to keep the conversation going about a new brand is to use a rolling launch.

At a May 2017 meeting, the Office of Communications and Marketing team began developing a plan to launch the brand through a series of pop-up events across campus, a special sneak-peek preview for select alumni and a social media campaign on the University's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram sites to create excitement around the roll out. The goal of the roll out was to create an interactive launch, generating buzz around the new brand through the giveaway of promotional items and gain awareness, recognition and use of the new brand by our various audiences — faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and the community.

It was determined that the University's Opening Conference, which formally welcomes back the faculty, would serve as the kick off for the new brand reveal and begin the pop-up events across campus.