

STRATEGY 1 - MAKE IT AUTHENTICALLY NOVA (POINT TO THE PILLARS)

“To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.” - Socrates

The first strategy for creating effective content is to make sure that every piece of content we create reinforces our brand promise and feels like it is authentic to NOVA. That can seem daunting, especially at a school of NOVA's size and complexity. No matter the topic, though, an effective content creator will make sure the ultimate message of the content points to at least one of our brand pillars.

As a reminder, our brand pillars are:

- Springboard to Opportunity.
- Relevant and In-Demand.
- Experts in the Classroom and In the Field.

- Big School Experience, Small School Feel.
- Real World Diversity.
- Outstanding Value.

In one way or another, every bit of content we create needs to help us convey one of those brand pillars.

POINT TO THE PILLARS

By keeping the brand pillars top of mind, you'll find many opportunities to reinforce them in your content. Sometimes it may make sense to literally include the name of the pillar (direct reinforcement) in your content. Other times, the substance of your content will help prove out one of our pillars without directly mentioning it (indirect reinforcement).

Whichever approach you choose, the key is to draw a direct connection between the message you're looking to convey to your particular audience and one of the brand messages NOVA is looking to emphasize as part of our brand promise.

The brand pillars aren't just descriptions of what we offer here at NOVA. They can become an engine for your content planning, helping you evaluate whether certain content efforts are worth your time and investment (does this reinforce the brand or not?). They can even act like spark plugs of inspiration for specific pieces, offering a creative framework for taking that next content piece from good to great!

For example:

- When crafting a webpage about an academic program, you could emphasize job opportunities for graduates as a way to reinforce that our offerings are "Relevant and In-Demand."
- When crafting a flier for an upcoming student activity on your campus that is open and inclusive, you can reinforce that using our "Real-World Diversity" pillar. The same pillar can be a great way to connect with a smaller tribe of like-minded people within a large college community ("Big School Experience, Small School Feel").
- When crafting an upcoming fundraising campaign, position the initiatives as "Springboards to Opportunity," not just for the NOVA students who will be the beneficiaries of donor generosity, but for the donors themselves. Our fundraising campaigns can be opportunities to help donors fulfill their own philanthropic missions.

Pro Tip: Before you start even outlining a particular piece of content, start by thinking about one to two pillars you want the ultimate message to reinforce. Write any pillars you choose at the top of your document for inspiration and accountability.

PROOF POINTS

If your role requires that you create content often, we recommend developing a set of proof points that speak to how your area (your campus, department, etc.) is delivering on the brand pillars and bring our brand promise to life. These proof points can be facts, anecdotes, or even messages you've tailored to particular audiences with whom you interact often.

Having a set of proof points at your fingertips will give you some brand guardrails, ensuring the things you're emphasizing are truly on-brand and consistent over time. They'll spark new ideas for content, too. You'll start noticing new ways every day that our brand pillars are coming to life, insights that you can surely mention to your audiences in the content you create.

To get you started, here are some College-level proof points that our marketing team is currently emphasizing in various content campaigns:

PILLAR - SPRINGBOARD TO OPPORTUNITY

- In total, NOVA offers nearly 150 degree and certificate programs designed to propel you to your four-year school or career of choice.
- More than 20 of our degree and certificate programs are offered entirely online, so you can work a NOVA education around even the busiest schedule.
- If you're looking to earn your bachelor's degree, NOVA enjoys agreements with more than 40 area colleges and universities that guarantee your admission if you meet the agreement's requirements. We even have a seamless 2+2 program with George Mason University, a program that will eliminate the "transfer" step on your way to a GMU bachelor's degree.
- At NOVA, we love helping students turn talents and passions into academic or professional opportunities. From nursing to automotive technology, engineering to cybersecurity, our wide range of programs help you channel your interests into opportunities that transform your future.
- At every NOVA campus, there are transfer counselors available to advise students toward a smooth, seamless transfer from Day One of the NOVA experience. We even have representatives from four-year institutions who often visit and work from NOVA's campuses, consulting with students interested in transferring to their institutions.

PILLAR - RELEVANT AND IN-DEMAND

- You'll hold 12-15 jobs across multiple fields by the time you retire. Given how fast technology is changing, several of those jobs don't yet exist. When they do - when you're ready for that second, or third, or ninth career change - we'll be here waiting and ready to help you retool.
- NOVA maintains deep connections with employers and leaders across the breadth of industries in Northern Virginia, tailoring our programs and teaching to prepare graduates that fit the profile of the employees they're looking to hire.
- Partnering with Amazon, NOVA launched the nation's first associates degree in cloud computing. We're also an important partner in helping Amazon find the talent it needs as it creates HQ2 in the years to come.
- NOVA's Workforce Division regularly conducts and publishes research on the economic conditions and the labor market in Northern Virginia to develop a pipeline of talent for our growing economy. Business leaders, government officials and civic groups actually consult NOVA as an authority on how the professional landscape is changing into the future. As a result, students can trust we have our finger on the pulse of what's emerging, what's fading, and what training you need to grow your career.
- More than just nursing, NOVA is training the full spectrum of medical professionals to close critical healthcare shortages in Virginia and across the country.
- NOVA's Medical Education Campus is the first specialized community college campus in the Commonwealth of Virginia, offering 10 nationally accredited health-related programs offered in state-of-the-art classrooms complete with labs, clinical technology and a clinical practice site for nursing and allied health students.
- SySTEMic Solutions is Northern Virginia Community College's STEM outreach program. We're passionate about developing a pipeline of student-centered activities from elementary school to career, building the STEM workforce of the future in the process.
- According to a [study](#) from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, STEM jobs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) will increase by 32% by 2020 in the state of Virginia alone. Most will require a postsecondary education. NOVA is ready to equip and retool students for these in-demand jobs with innovative programs, collegewide STEM initiatives and partnerships with industry-leading employers.
- Along with relevant coursework, NOVA partners with employers across a variety of industries to offer coordinated internships and cooperative education experiences, giving students both practical experience and invaluable networking opportunities within their fields of choice.

EXPERTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE FIELD

- At most schools, the faculty's primary focus is research and scholarship, not teaching. Graduate assistants often teach freshman and sophomore courses, so professors may not even know their students' names. Not so at NOVA. Our faculty's passion and primary focus is teaching, and classes are small enough for students to enjoy close, personal attention from the experts themselves.
- NOVA's faculty are highly qualified, credentialed by the top universities and institutions in the nation. But even more important to our students is the fact that the majority of our instructors have years, even decades of professional experience in their fields of instruction. They've managed businesses, founded startups, patented products, engineered tech solutions, cared for patients and built extensive networks within their fields.
- Our faculty know their stuff. Not only do they hold graduate degrees from the nation's top institutions, most of them have years, even decades of actual work experience in their fields of instruction.
- Since its inception in 1987, 13 of NOVA's faculty have earned the prestigious Outstanding Faculty of the Year Award by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the highest honor for public and private college faculty. Dr. Margaret Leary, a professor of Information Technology and the director of the Cybersecurity Program, is the most recent recipient.

BIG SCHOOL EXPERIENCE, SMALL SCHOOL FEEL

- NOVA is the second largest community college in the nation and the second largest public college in the mid-Atlantic region.
- NOVA is the largest public higher education institution in the commonwealth. Given our reach, when you graduate and transfer on or enter the workforce, there's a good chance a number of your classmates, colleagues, supervisors and new friends will also be fellow NOVA alumni.
- More than 29% of Virginia's population lives within a quick bus ride of one of NOVA's six campuses. We're an institution big enough to be accessible and convenient, with campuses small enough to offer a comfortable, personal learning experience.
- Academic Advising is one of the most important aspects of the NOVA experience. We have advisors at every campus available to help students choose majors, plan courses and prepare for next steps beyond NOVA, whether that's transferring or starting a new career.
- For students who can't make it to one of our campuses, we even offer virtual advising, available free to every student.
- From intramural sports to an honors program, student government to theater and the arts, there are a host of student life opportunities outside the classroom at each of NOVA's campuses. You won't have to wait until your four-year transfer to enjoy an awesome college experience.
- We are nearly 100,000 students strong at NOVA, but within your campus, your major, your favorite club or organization, your classroom and your circle of friends, the experience feels much smaller. There are tons of smaller communities within the larger whole, so you're sure to find your tribe.

- Offering far more than “accommodations,” our Disability Support Services team takes a proactive approach to ensuring that every student has an opportunity to thrive at NOVA. We foster partnerships between students, faculty, and relevant support staff to help students succeed, no matter the challenge to overcome.

REAL-WORLD DIVERSITY

- The student body at NOVA mirrors the growing diversity of our region. Our students represent more than 150 countries and a broad range of ethnic, cultural, political, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds and perspectives. We’re all different, and we’re all NOVA.
- NOVA is home to students of all ages and backgrounds. In your courses, you’ll study alongside students who are both similar and different from you, a rich variety of perspectives that enhances the learning experience.
- Minority students are in the collective majority at NOVA. Given the size of our student body, not only is there a strong collective diversity, but minority students even find smaller communities of people who share their backgrounds and perspectives within the larger whole.
- At NOVA, everyone is welcome and everyone is valued.
- At NOVA, we measure quality and value not just by rankings and awards but by the outcomes our students achieve.
 - Could pair this with a set of statistics on job placement, graduation rates, etc. (mentioned above).
- Not only is no one marginalized at NOVA, we’re working hard to erase the margins altogether.
- Led by our Lesbian, gay, Bisexual and Transgender Club, we’re committed to creating a safe place for LGBTQ individuals at NOVA and to promoting an open and positive dialogue regarding orientation and gender.
- The clubs, organizations and cultural events offered at NOVA reflect the diversity of our student body. Whatever your race, ethnicity, spiritual or religious perspective, political opinions, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender, you’ll find communities of people who are both similar and different, a rich diversity that mirrors our surrounding community.

OUTSTANDING VALUE

- By starting your four-year education at NOVA before transferring to earn a bachelor’s degree, it’s possible to save tens of thousands of dollars in tuition compared to those who start at four-year institutions.
- Statistics prove that students who earn associate degrees at NOVA before transferring to four-year institutions actually earn higher GPAs as juniors than their classmates who started at the four-year institutions.
- NOVA offers more than \$100 million in Pell Grant aid every year—more than all the Ivy League institutions combined.
- In the 2015-16 academic year alone, NOVA students were awarded more than \$131 million in financial aid to help them pay for college.
- The average annual salary for occupations in which NOVA graduates typically work is more than \$62,000.
- Whatever barriers might prevent students from pursuing a NOVA education – whether they’re academic, financial, cultural or circumstantial – we strive to eliminate them.