

BRAND & CONTENT GUIDE

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NYU | WAGNER

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WHY A BRAND & CONTENT GUIDE?

Every one of us is a “content creator” and a brand ambassador for NYU Wagner. We all play some role in communicating about the school—whether writing web content, creating collateral materials, writing emails for internal and external audiences, or even just verbally talking about Wagner. All of this content reflects who we are and how we’re perceived by our audiences.

With so many different content creators across the school, we have an opportunity to strengthen and streamline our content, both on and offline. If we all have the same tools, resources, and guidelines, then the Wagner voice and message will be more consistent—and, ultimately, our brand will be stronger. This will only help us reach and engage our target audiences.

In order to create strong content, we should all have an understanding of:

1. Our mission (goals)
2. Our brand (personality)
3. Our voice (tone)
4. Our message (language)
5. Our style (grammar)

Effective content communicates our message clearly and consistently, in a voice that reflects our personality and speaks to our target audience.

This guide provides a way for you to make our message and voice consistent with our brand. Using this guide as a reference will help you to:

- Streamline the content creation process
- Write more creatively
- Develop a more consistent audience experience that makes an impact
- Bring the Wagner experience to life

This will create a better, cleaner, and more impactful experience for all of our key audiences (prospective students, current students, alumni, donors, etc.)—on the website and anywhere else that we are communicating about the school.

OUR MISSION

A mission statement describes why and how we do the work we do. What kind of world do we want to create? What is our purpose for existing?

MISSION

NYU Wagner prepares public service leaders to translate ideas into actions that have an effective and lasting impact on the public good. Our faculty's research changes the way people frame, understand, and act on important public issues. We provide our students with critical skills, access to all that New York City has to offer, and a deep understanding of context surrounding public service challenges—which they use to improve cities and communities across the globe.

WAGNER'S UNIQUE APPROACH

We:

1. Give our students the critical analytic **skills and frameworks** they need to succeed across disciplines, fields, and geographic regions;
2. Help our students take full advantage of the networks, jobs, and organizations that thrive in **New York City**—which they use as a springboard to the rest of the world; and
3. Make sure our students understand that there is no one-size-fits-all solution in public service, and they must acknowledge the distinct institutions, cultures, and **contexts** where they're doing work of public good.

OUR BRAND

A brand is like a personality: it defines the unique characteristics of an organization. It's not just a logo, a tagline, a product, or an ad campaign. It's all of those things put together, plus customer service, user experience, design, etc.

NYU Wagner's unique brand is shaped by our Big Idea and built on our self-definition—the values that define the Wagner experience and engage our audience. By connecting our message to our brand, we give our audiences a clear view of our perspective, values, and benefits.

THE BIG IDEA

Ideas into Action for Impact

OUR SELF-DEFINITION

A. WHO WE ARE

Conversation Movers
Idea Generators
Decision Makers
Action Takers

We are a collective of change makers who unite purpose with action.

B. WHAT WE BELIEVE

Knowledge activates
Ideas initiate
Context illuminates
Action delivers

We make positive change when we grapple with real-world complexity.

C. WHAT WE DO

We put ideas to work. We test and tweak them in a real-world context and share our findings.

D. HOW WE'RE DIFFERENT

URBAN LABORATORY, GLOBAL IMPACT.

We infuse an urban perspective into all of our programs. We take full advantage of being in New York City to learn about public service issues and use that knowledge as a springboard to make an impact in cities globally.

DEEP DIVERSITY.

As an institution and in our work, we grapple with issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that we do. It's a collective work in progress. By promoting these values, we believe we can build better solutions to our toughest social challenges.

EMBRACE COMPLEXITY.

Public service issues are interconnected and so are we. We break the boundaries between disciplines—because in real life, housing affects bike lanes affect health. We connect the dots because we know it's critical to finding innovative and thoughtful solutions.

STRONG COMMUNITY.

We are collaborative, collective, and connective. As we build our individual pathways, our bonds propel us to the greater good.

FACE REALITY.

The public good: it's complicated. We assess the conditions, develop smart solutions—and test them, tweak them, refine, and toughen them by applying them to messy, real-world problems.

E. WHO ARE WE?

We are in and of the city, embedded. On blocks and in neighborhoods, from the streets to the capital, we put our ideas to work. And as we grapple with the complexity of the world's urban laboratory, we learn this: Context shapes solutions. Understand context, and you can hit the ground running...

Anywhere.

OUR VOICE

Wagner's voice is colored by our personality as an institution—the particular traits that describe us. By speaking in the Wagner voice and tone, we offer our audience a powerful way to relate to us.

OUR VOICE, EMBODIED

If our voice were a person, who would it be?

- A passionate realist with no time to waste
- Compassionate but not gushy
- Challenges the status quo when necessary
- Totally street savvy
- Casually confident
- Always direct
- Engaging and personal
- Optimistic
- Kinda tough...
- ...But with a heart of gold

An NYC native, Wagner graduate, and experienced change maker who's been there and done that—and is *still* all fired up.

OUR VOICE & TONE ATTRIBUTES

We construct voice through a combination of style elements: vocabulary, rhythm, mood, and structure. But to use voice authentically, we have to feel it. Descriptive attributes help us to internalize voice and tone.

OUR VOICE ATTRIBUTES	OUR TONE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action-oriented• More street than tower• Other-oriented and altruistic• Community-centric• Approachable and personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real• Relatable• Confident• Optimistic• Engaging• Personal

OUR MESSAGE

These guidelines can help you "speak Wagner," whether you're writing new content or rewriting existing copy. In light rewrites, some simple strategies can help you create the Wagner voice. The before-and-after examples below illustrate how.

You won't be able to apply every guideline in every instance, and being slavish about them won't help you develop an authentic voice. Use them as touchstones.

Of course, remember to know your audience. You would use different language with an employer than you would with a current student. Make the message appropriate for the audience.

1. ACTION-ORIENTED: MESSAGING EXAMPLES

Favor short sentences to keep pace fast and emphasize the dynamic

BEFORE:

Launched in 2011, the Wagner Innovation Labs are a new series of experiments that marry theory and practice to promote informed, evidence-based policy decision-making in a complex world. Each Lab has its own focus and approach, and operates independently, but all reflect NYU Wagner's broad commitment to bringing scholars, thinkers and practitioners together, both figuratively and literally, to improve the way policy is made.

AFTER:

A series of experiments, the Wagner Innovation Labs were launched in 2001. They unite theory with practice to promote informed, evidence-based, policy decision-making in a complex world. Each Lab has its own focus and approach. Each operates independently. But all reflect NYU Wagner's broad commitment: we bring scholars, thinkers, and practitioners together—figuratively and literally—to improve the way policy is made.

Clearly connect actions with outcomes

BEFORE:

The S.E.E. strategies combine what you're looking for with what employers are looking for so that you're better poised for a successful career by maximizing your time while in school. You want to be smart, experienced, and engaged.

AFTER:

The S.E.E. strategies poised you for a successful career—they make you smart, experienced, and engaged so you can have maximum impact in your field. How? These strategies help you consider what you're looking for along with what employers are looking for so that you maximize your time while in school.

BEFORE:

REAL ESTATE, HOUSING, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

The Economic Development and Housing specialization trains students for careers in housing, community development, real estate, and economic development. The major goals of this specialization are to:

- Teach underlying economic theory governing real estate markets, politics surrounding the development process, and social theory underpinning the role of community organizations and residents.
- Provide historical perspectives needed to understand and analyze current planning and policy issues, as well as the practical skills, such as real estate finance, needed to work in these fields.

AFTER:

IN ACTION: REAL ESTATE, HOUSING, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

How you can make an impact

Prepare for a career in housing, community development, real estate, or economic development.

Build your toolbox

Develop the historical perspectives you'll need to understand and analyze current planning and policy issues, along with the practical skills, such as real estate and finance, that will help you make an impact in these fields. You'll learn:

- Economic theory governing real estate markets
- Politics surrounding the development process
- Social theory underpinning the role of community organizations and residents

Use the imperative where appropriate and avoid participles and infinitives, which feel more passive

BEFORE:

Before meeting with a career advisor, be sure to review our "How-To Guides" for helpful tips, tools, and templates!

AFTER:

Before you meet with a career advisor, review our "How-To Guides" for helpful tips, tools, and templates.

Emphasize impact

BEFORE:

NYU Wagner has been educating and preparing the world's future public service leaders since 1938. Our students translate personal commitment into nonprofit, public, and private sector careers. Our faculty conduct research that changes the way people frame, understand, analyze, and act on issues of public importance.

AFTER:

IDEAS INTO ACTION

NYU Wagner has been preparing the world's change makers since 1938. Our students arrive with passion and purpose and move on to grapple with the most complex and pressing issues of our time. Our alumni pursue public service careers that span the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Our faculty conducts research that changes the way the world acts on issues that affect us all. At NYU Wagner, we are all making an impact.

Use active voice

BEFORE:

Advisement begins with online Registration Advisement Webinars, which are conducted by the program administrator of each program. After participating in a Registration Advisement Webinar, incoming students are assigned to a peer group led by a Peer Advisor. Once the term begins, students are encouraged to seek out faculty for academic advisement.

AFTER:

Advisement starts with your online Registration Advisement Webinar, which your Program Administrator will conduct. Step two: We'll assign you to a peer group led by a Peer Advisor. We encourage you to seek out faculty for academic advisement once the term begins.

2. MORE STREET THAN TOWER: MESSAGING EXAMPLES

Use conversational constructions, and words that are in common use

BEFORE:

GET INVOLVED

There are many ways for students to become involved at NYU Wagner, including student organizations, volunteer efforts, and community events.

STUDENT CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

NYU Wagner Student Groups give members of the community a chance to engage in diverse social, educational, and informational programs. The groups are designed to enrich the Wagner experience by facilitating networking socials, panel discussions, seminars, academic talks, community outreach projects, and a range of other activities. **All students in order to be eligible for nomination, appointment, or election in an official club or organization role, must be in good academic standing and maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.**

AFTER:

BE INVOLVED

Student organizations, volunteer efforts, community events—these are just some of the ways you can get involved at Wagner.

STUDENT CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Pick from a range of social, educational, and informational programs through Wagner’s student groups. From networking socials and community outreach projects, to panel discussions, seminars, and academic talks, the groups will help you get the most out of your time at Wagner.

What you need to know: You must be in good academic standing and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher to serve as a student group leader.

Pare down to essentials—don’t be wordy

BEFORE:

If you are unable to be here in person, we can also meet with you via phone or Skype. Expedite your request by including your degree program and specialization, your preferred appointment times, and a brief overview of the topic(s) you’d like to discuss.

AFTER:

If you can’t be here in person, request a phone or Skype meeting with us. Include your degree program, specialization, preferred appointment times, and what you’d like to discuss.

3. OTHER-ORIENTED AND ALTRUISTIC: MESSAGING EXAMPLES

Emphasize "other"/"impact" over "self"/"personal achievement"—even when describing career advancement strategies

BEFORE:

Deciding where to attend graduate school can be difficult. When choosing the right school, students must carefully consider many factors. Elements you might consider in evaluating NYU Wagner's fit for you include information about where our alumni work, the impact they are having on the world, and the support at Wagner that helped get them there.

AFTER:

You want to pick the graduate school that will give you the framework you need to make your impact. It's a tough choice to make, and many factors play into it. When you evaluate how well NYU Wagner fits your goals, consider where our alumni work, the impact they are making on the world, and the support at Wagner that helped get them there.

Use words that belong in an inherently pro-social or other-oriented value "frame" and avoid those that belong in opposing, self-oriented value frames. (Think about the contexts that words conjure.)

BEFORE:

Today's world of public service is flexible and fluid, with change as the only constant. To succeed, professionals need a broad and transferable education. The MPA-PNP degree crosses traditional boundaries. Our students learn a set of frameworks and analytics that will serve them in the many roles, organizations and sectors their careers will span.

AFTER:

Public service is a fluid world today—one that calls for flexibility. To prepare, you need a broad education that you can apply in any context. The MPA-PNP degree crosses traditional boundaries. You'll learn a set of frameworks and analytics that will allow you to make an impact in the many roles, organizations, and sectors that your career will span.

4. COMMUNITY-CENTRIC: MESSAGING EXAMPLES

Use "we" wherever relevant

BEFORE:

A faculty's interests can be an important deciding factor when choosing a program. At NYU Wagner, our faculty is active, accessible, and engaged. They are as dedicated to making a difference in their field as they are to their students.

AFTER:

When you're choosing a program, a faculty's interests can be an important deciding factor. At NYU Wagner, we are an active, accessible, and engaged faculty. Our members are as dedicated to making a difference in our fields as we are to our students.

BEFORE:

Cities and communities face complicated and messy challenges that don't have simple solutions—they're intertwined. A child's ability to succeed in school is impacted by his access to affordable healthcare, which is affected by his transportation options, housing quality, and economic opportunity. NYU Wagner's multidisciplinary approach teaches students to embrace this complexity. Students learn skills in management, policy, finance, healthcare, and urban planning, while also breaking down the barriers between these fields.

AFTER:

Our cities and communities face complicated and messy challenges that don't have simple solutions—they're intertwined. A child's ability to succeed in school is impacted by his access to affordable healthcare, which is affected by his transportation options, housing quality, and economic opportunity. You can't address one issue without understanding the others. We don't avoid this complexity; we embrace it. As a multidisciplinary school, we offer specialized skill sets in management, policy, finance, healthcare, and urban planning, while also breaking down the barriers between these fields. We connect the dots because we know it's critical to finding innovative and thoughtful solutions to our world's most pressing challenges.

Emphasize connection within the community

BEFORE:

Students come to NYU Wagner from across the US and around the world, arriving with rich experiences in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors and with backgrounds in nearly every academic discipline imaginable. In addition to our coursework, they all are looking for ways to connect with others, learn the ropes, find their groove, and maximize their time while here.

AFTER:

NYU Wagner unites students from across the US and around the world. As students, we bring backgrounds in nearly every academic discipline and share rich experiences in every sector: public, nonprofit, and private. We're looking for more than coursework at Wagner. We're finding ways to connect with others, learn the ropes, find our groove, and get the most out of our time here.

5. APPROACHABLE AND PERSONAL: MESSAGING EXAMPLES

Use headlines to frame an idea

EXAMPLES:

Wagner Students Are Hands-On

Whether we're coordinating the expansion of a BID or launching a micro-lending program in Tanzania, we're on the ground making change.

Being a Wagner Student

We're a diverse community united by passion. We're part of the fabric of NYC. We call ourselves Wagnerds.

Living in NYC

Get the nitty gritty—so you can call NYC home.

Avoid exhaustive lists—instead try colons, em dashes, or bullets

BEFORE:

This area of expertise develops students' skills in a variety of interpersonal, organizational, and leadership processes. These skills include supervising and motivating employees to do their best work, working in groups and teams, influencing up and down hierarchies and across social networks, negotiating and managing conflict with others, learning from cultural diversity, and reflecting on and changing one's own practice.

AFTER:

In this area of expertise, you'll learn a variety of interpersonal, organizational, and leadership processes. You'll be able to:

- Supervise and motivate employees to do their best work
- Work in groups and teams
- Influence up and down hierarchies and across social networks
- Negotiate and manage conflict with others
- Learn from cultural diversity
- Reflect on and change your own practice

MESSAGING TIPS: SUMMARY

- Use Wagner's vocabulary liberally to drive home our personality and message.
- Avoid letting sentences get bogged down with exhaustive lists—these distract from a focused read. Instead, try introducing a series of items with a colon or separating with em-dashes, or use bullets where appropriate.
- Find a rhythmic balance between short and longer sentences.
- Pare down to essentials and ideas that strongly communicate what differentiates Wagner.
- Weave a single idea through the copy.
- Where the format calls for a headline, use it to frame that idea.
- Use active voice.
- Focus on impact!

CONSTRUCTING VOICE: STUDENT & ALUMNI PROFILES

- Student and alumni profiles can be powerful reading for prospective students—if those profiles feel relatable and real. Here, a remodeling of the content along with light copy tweaks can make a difference.
- Abandon Q&A structure, which feels self-serving and counteracts the "real." Instead, adopt a first-person perspective throughout.
- When asking a question about "Why Wagner?" lead with the person's goal to make the copy more relatable to a prospective student.
- Enhance engagement by following goal with the alumni's current position—it helps tell the story.
- Lightly massage the copy (without putting thoughts or words in the person's mouth) so that it sounds more conversational.

BEFORE:

Why did you choose Wagner for graduate school?

I chose Wagner for its unique approach to urban planning. Wagner houses their planning program in a School of Public Service, not in a school of architecture. I had a clear vision of how I wanted to be of service to this world. To be trained in a school of public service in order to understand how best to serve the world? That was a no-brainer!

How did your Wagner experience prepare you professionally for what you are doing today?

Without a doubt, the ability to work in teams for a shared goal is something that I had no idea how to do before Wagner. Through Capstone and shared projects, Wagner asserted that teamwork and thriving teams were essential to public service. By requiring us to work alongside Policy students and Health Management students to name a few, Wagner normalized the idea that the most innovative ideas are at the point of intersection. Additionally, to learn planning in New York was simply amazing!

What are the advantages of the Wagner alumni network?

All Wagner alumni come from a place of service. To be amongst people who are striving to make a difference in the world, well, there's pretty much nothing like it in this city. Wagner alumni are, hands down, coming from a place of "yes" when the world often says "no."

AFTER:

Why Wagner?

I had a clear vision of how I wanted to be of service to this world. Wagner has a unique approach to urban planning: It houses its planning program in a School of Public Service, not in a school of architecture. To be trained in a school of public service in order to understand how best to serve the world? That was a no-brainer!

What I'm doing today

Director of Neighborhood Health, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

How Wagner prepared me

Before Wagner, I had no idea how to work in teams for a shared goal. Through Capstone and shared projects, Wagner taught me that teamwork and thriving teams are essential to public service. By requiring us to work alongside Policy students and Health Management students—to name a few—Wagner normalized the idea that the most innovative ideas are at the point of intersection. And to learn planning in New York was simply amazing!

Life in the Wagner alumni network

All Wagner alumni come from a place of service. To be among people who are striving to make a difference in the world, well, there's pretty much nothing like it in this city. Wagner alumni are, hands down, coming from a place of "yes" when the world often says "no."

OUR STYLE

Grammar and punctuation are an equally important part of communicating. Using a consistent and grammatically correct style makes it easier for the reader to understand what we're saying. (And it also demonstrates our intelligence and attention to detail!)

In general, we follow the Chicago Manual of Style, which is available online. For easy reference, you can also find an abbreviated **Editorial Style Guide** and a **Quick Tips: Written Style Guide** on the faculty & staff portal (wagner.nyu.edu/portal/faculty-staff/restricted/communications).

Below are a few guidelines for commonly used words and phrases.

1. USE THE OXFORD (SERIAL) COMMA

This is the third comma in a list of three or more things.

Example: We offer MPA, MUP, and EMPA degrees.

2. USE ONE SPACE BETWEEN SENTENCES, NOT TWO.

3. SPECIFIC WORDS

The words nonprofit, healthcare, email, website, and online are one word, lowercase, and do not have hyphens. Full-time and part-time are one word, with hyphens.

4. NUMBERS

Write out numbers zero through nine. Use digits for 10 and up. The exception is if you're starting a sentence with a number—then it gets written out no matter what.

5. DEGREE NAMES

A specific degree name is singular. A degree in general is possessive.

Example: I thought I wanted a Master of Public Administration degree, but instead I got a master's degree in another field.

6. SCHOOL NAME

For external audiences, refer to the school as NYU Wagner whenever possible. The exception is when the school name is used repeatedly, then simply Wagner can be used. For internal audiences, using Wagner is fine. We do not use the term “the Wagner School.”

7. DATES AND TIMES

For dates, use the number instead of the ordinal figure. For times, use am and pm, lowercase, without periods.

Example: March 6 (not March 6th)

Example: 6:00pm – 8:00pm

8. EM DASH

The em dash (—) is useful for: emphasizing part of a sentence, indicating a break in thought, in place of saying “for example,” or instead of commas. Do not use spaces around it.

Example: Because the data had not been fully analyzed—let alone collated—the publication was delayed.

9. AVOID “CLICK HERE”

When writing for the web, avoid using the term “click here” when inserting a link. Instead, turn it into an action and tell the user exactly where they’re going.

Example: Read more about our academic policies.

10. ALUMNI

When referring to alumni, use:

	Female	Male	Nonbinary
Singular	Alumna	Alumnus	Graduate
Plural	Alumnae	Alumni	Alumni

The term “alum” or “alums” may also be used as an **informal** way of referring to graduates.

When referencing a specific Wagner graduate, use the following format:

John Doe (MPA-PNP 2014)

11. PHONE NUMBERS

Write phone numbers with periods, not parenthesis and dashes. For example:

212.998.7400

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Chicago Manual of Style

www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

NYU Wagner Editorial Style Guide

wagner.nyu.edu/restricted/guides/quicklinks

Quick Tips: Written Style Guide

wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/WrittenStyle_ShortGuide.pdf

NYU Language Guide

www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/advertisePublications/documents/standards/NYUIdentity_Language_030614.pdf

NYU Editorial Guide

http://www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/advertisePublications/documents/standards/NYU-Editorial-Guide_May2015.pdf

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