Exploring the best school branding examples (ideas with impact)

Category: Branding
written by Stewart Hodgson | 9 May 2024

Not so long ago, I would have had trouble creating a list of amazing school branding examples. A lot of the top educational institutions didn't invest much time or effort into the branding process. Sure, they had their own logo, and maybe a website, but that was about it.

Now, however, the educational industry is becoming more competitive. Universities, high schools, and elementary schools need a brand to not only attract students and parents but distinguish themselves as leaders in their space.

In recent years, my team here at Fabrik has helped numerous schools reinvigorate, enhance, or optimize their brands, to ensure they can form an emotional connection with their target audience.

Here, I'll share my favorite examples of exceptional school branding, and offer insights into how a strong brand strategy can transform your school's identity.

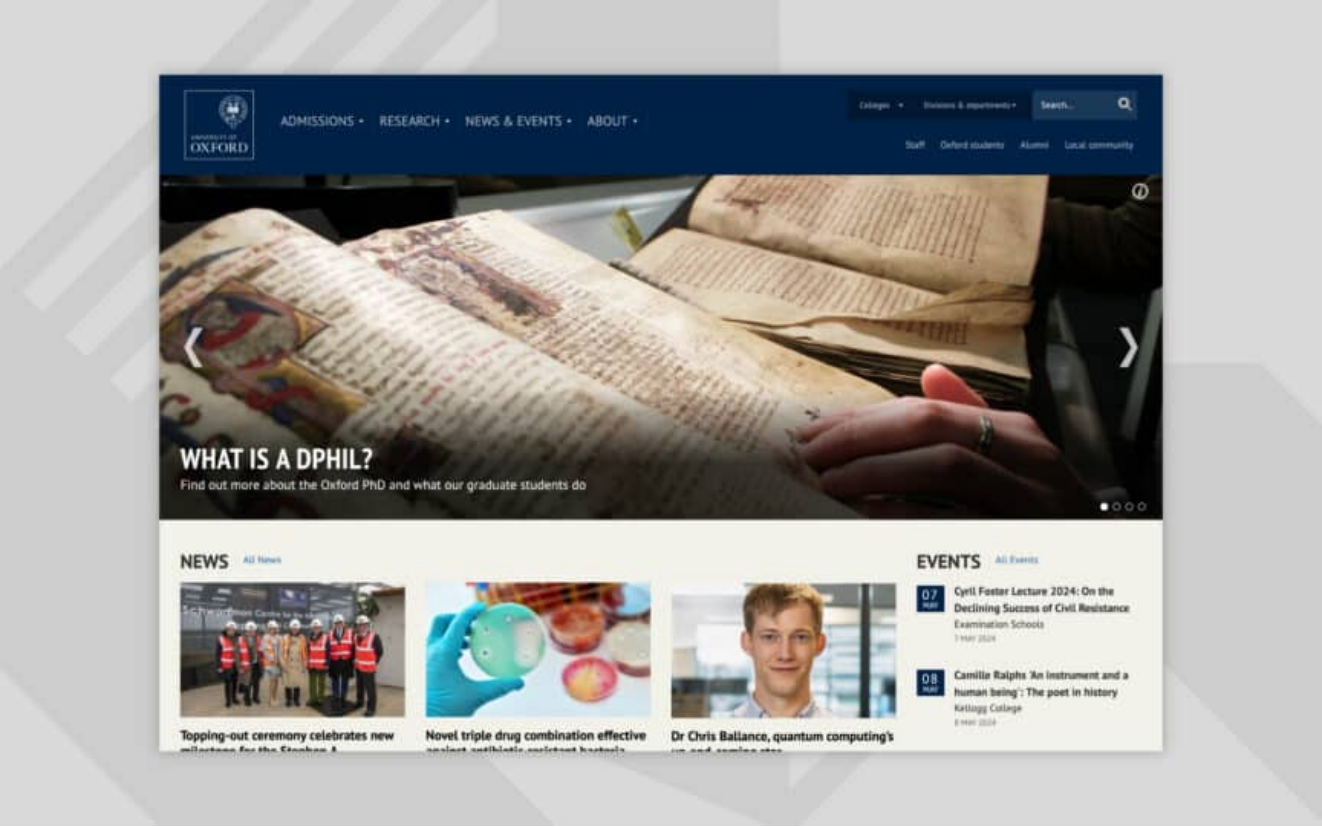
What is school branding?

School branding is the art of creating a distinct identity and image for an educational institution. It's not just about designing a great school logo or choosing the right color palettes for your marketing materials and school website. It's about forging a connection with a specific audience.

An effective brand encompasses all the elements that make your school more appealing to students, alumni, investors, and even

faculty members. It’s how you showcase your school’s vision, upgrade the impact of your promotional materials, and distinguish your facility from the competition.

As an example, let’s look at one of the world’s most prestigious universities: Oxford.



Visit the Oxford University website, and you’ll see endless examples of a brand strategy at work.

The university has:

- A distinct, simple, and descriptive school name.
- Clearly defined values, and a strong mission statement.
- A traditional logo, demonstrating authority and history.
- Consistent color schemes, used through all their promotional assets.
- A clear tone of voice and personality shared through its content.

And we see all that just from a quick glance. Dive deeper into

Oxford's unique approach to branding and you'll find endless visual elements, marketing materials, and pieces of content that further enhance the impact the school has on its audience.

Why are school brands important?

So why do you need to invest in school branding? Usually, when people think of branding, they think of for-profit organizations, enterprises, and retail companies, not schools. However, whether you're running a public or private institution, good branding pays dividends.

Your brand identity, and brand image is how you go from being just another educational group, to a community staple. Excellent branding tells your target audience why you're the best school for their needs, whether you're trying to attract new students, or world-class educators.

With a clear brand identity, you can:

Attract more prospective students

One of the most obvious reasons school branding matters is that it helps attract potential students. Students look at your brand to learn about your school spirit, check the authority of your institution, and even determine whether you can help drive them towards academic achievement.

Enhance your promotional materials

A well-defined brand ensures you're sending the right message to students, investors, and faculty members across all communication channels. It helps you define the right tone of voice to use in marketing materials and share a consistent image with your community.

Distinguish yourself from the competition

Through effective branding, you can differentiate your school’s identity from competitors, with insights into your core values, your accomplishments, and your vision for the future.

Recruit new faculty members

As mentioned above, consistent branding can also help to attract the right people to your team. Every educator wants to be associated with a school that has an excellent reputation.

Encourage community support

Good branding can even boost the level of community support you get as a school. It can inspire alumni to help promote your brand and encourage parents to enroll children in your school.

School branding examples to learn from

Now I’ve covered the basics of school branding, it’s time to take a deep dive into some great examples. Notably, there are a lot of public schools, private schools, and universities that have developed amazing brands in recent years.

For this list, I’m focusing on the most impactful, or unique examples of school branding, with key tips you can take away from each case study.

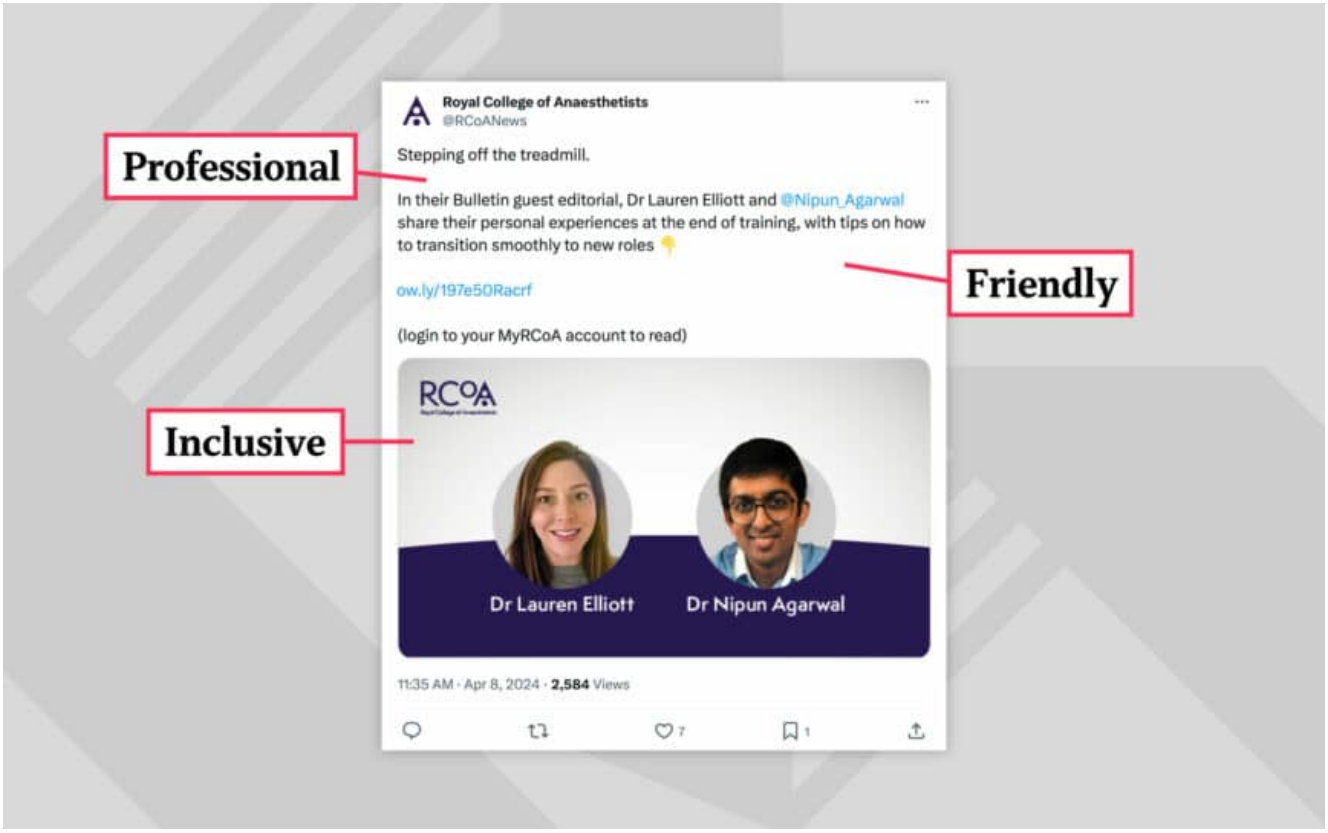


1. The Royal College of Anaesthetists

Let's start with one of Fabrik's own client success stories. The Royal College of Anaesthetists, or "RCOA", is one of the newest royal colleges to emerge in the UK. When the team came to us for help building a brand, it wanted to distinguish itself from other, "traditional" universities.

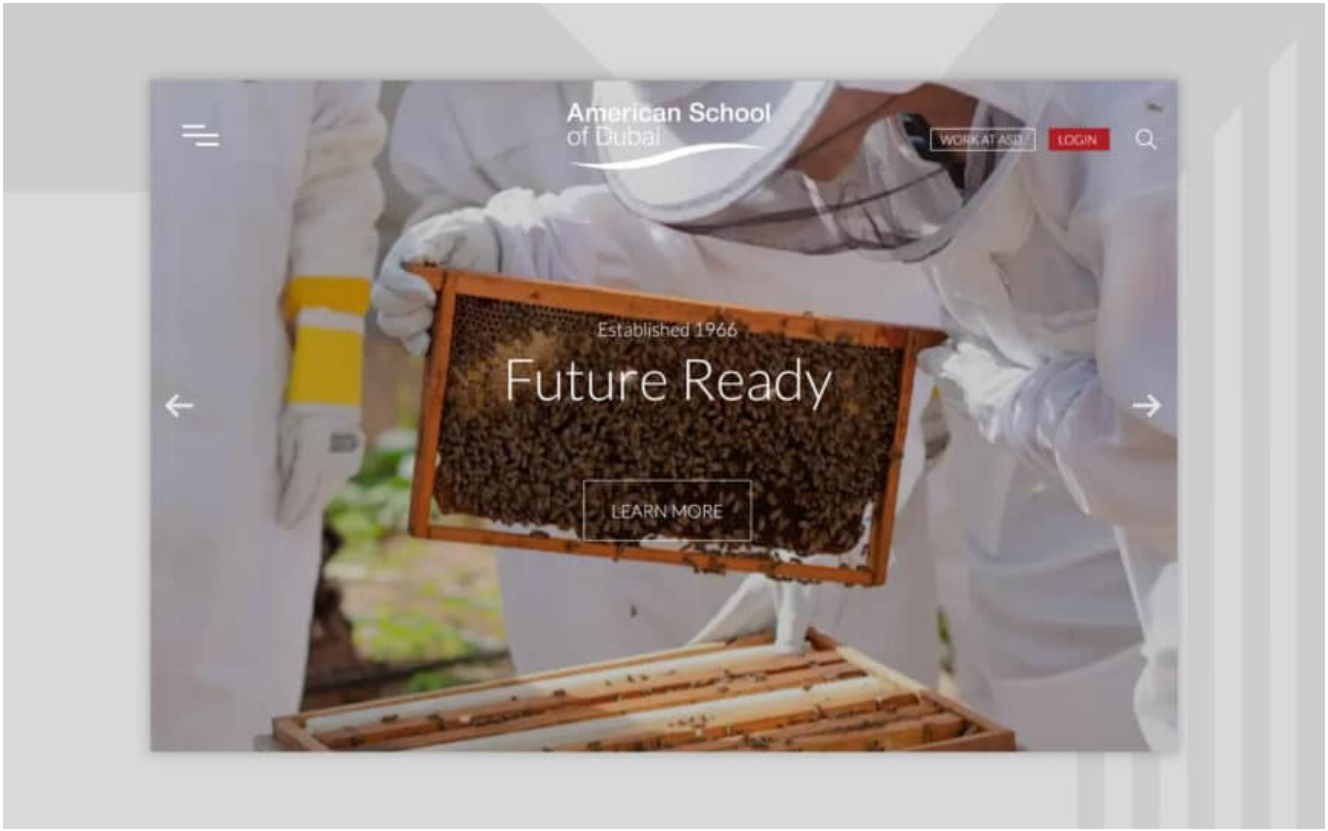
This was a school that wanted to be seen as modern, cutting-edge, and sustainable. To achieve that goal, we created a distinct logo for the institution, combining minimalist shapes with a bold and contemporary typeface.

We chose a sleek color palette and drew attention to the "A" in the school's name, to draw attention to the concepts of ambition and the pursuit of excellence. We even defined a tone of voice for the group, which combines professionalism with inclusivity.



Together, the RCoA's friendly tone of voice, eye-catching visual identity, and approach to marketing sets it apart as a leader in higher education.

Key tip: What makes RCoA's branding so powerful is it distinguishes the group from other, more traditional educational institutions. Rather than just following the status quo, look for ways to differentiate your brand, based on your school's strengths.

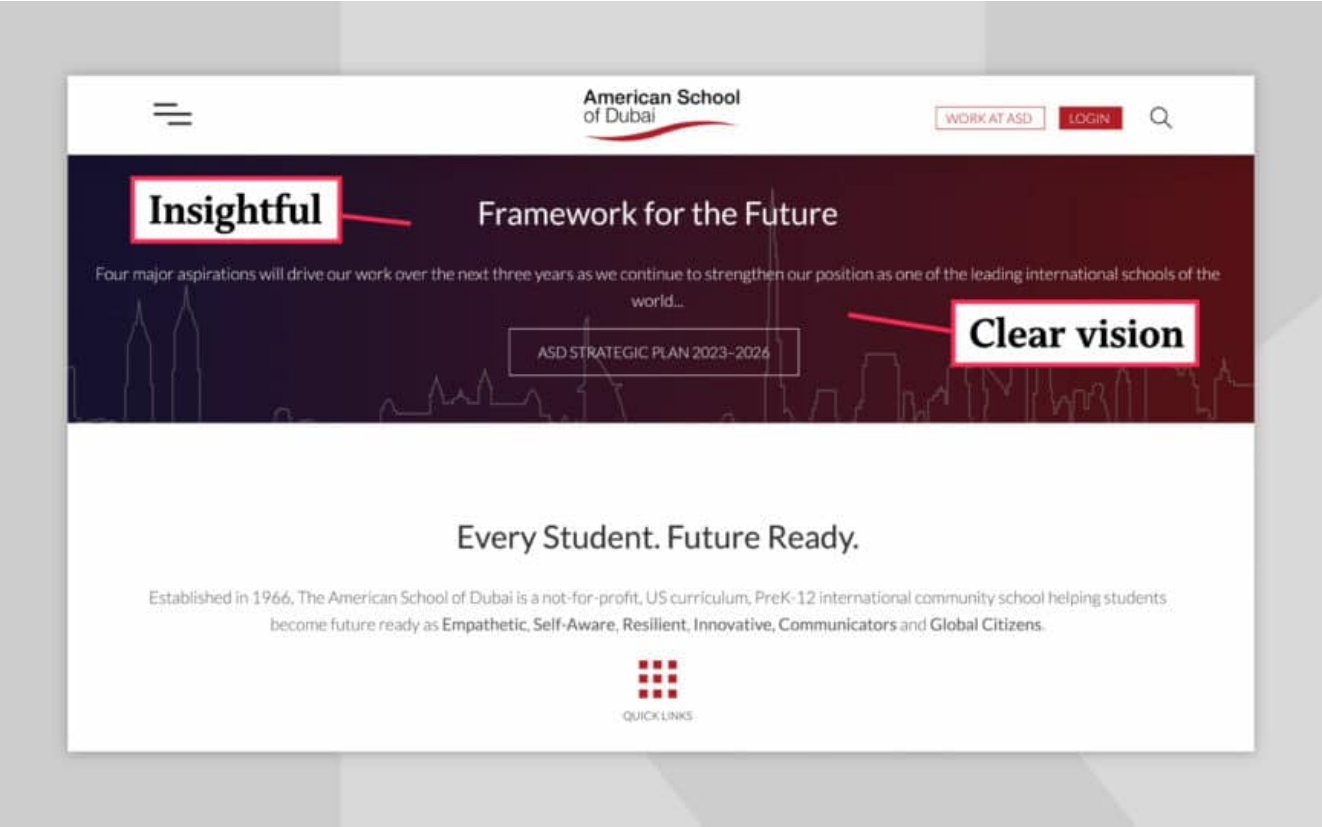


2. The American School of Dubai

The American School of Dubai is another of my favorite school branding examples. Established in 1966, the institution doesn’t focus on its history, but on its vision for the future. As you’ll notice on the brand’s website, the group is constantly drawing attention to its forward-thinking approach.

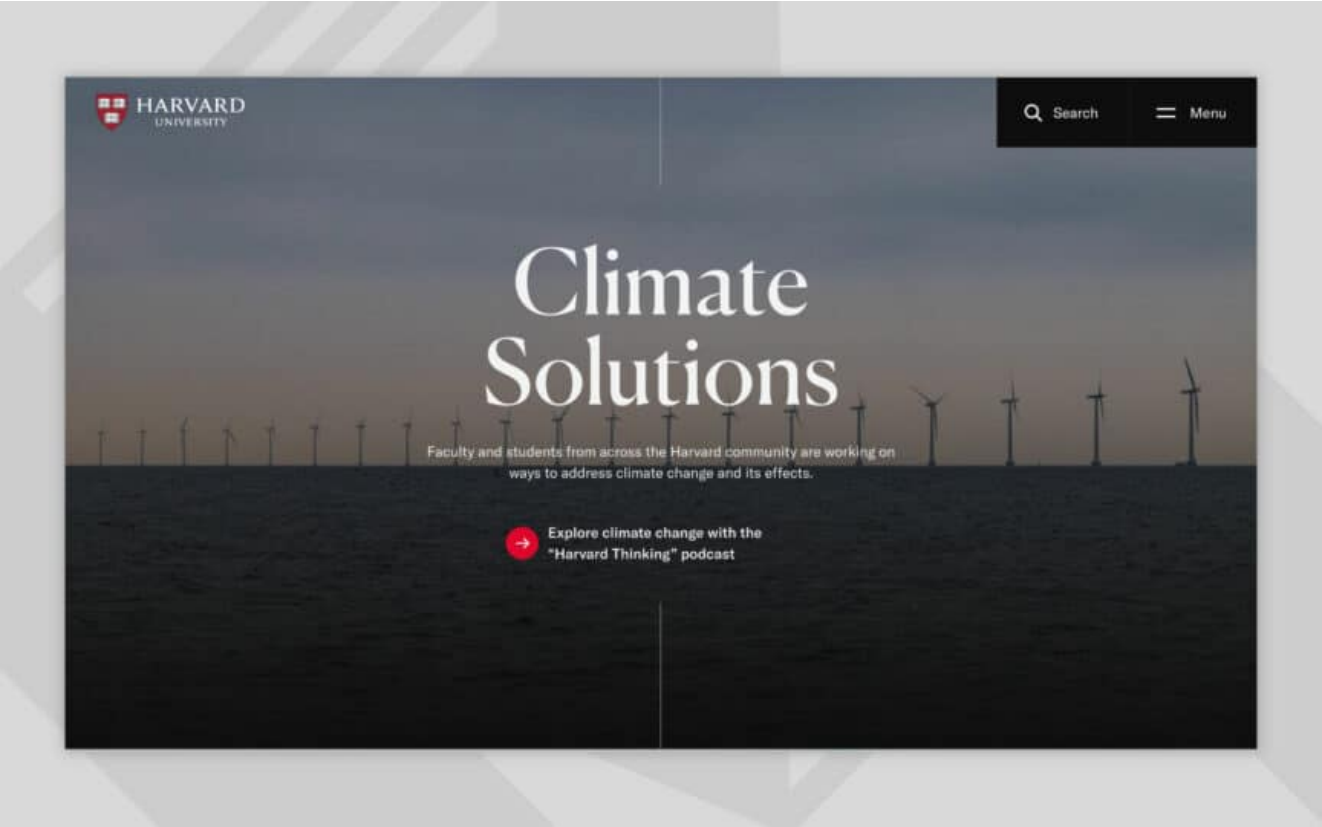
The university shares tons of valuable content that help to elevate its brand, from student stories to insights from alumni, and even videos created by staff members.

Plus, it demonstrates a commitment to transparency, by sharing regular reports and “strategic plans” that outline its promises for the future.



On top of that, the group benefits from a minimalist but impactful logo, combining a simple wavy line with sleek sans-serif font. There's even a great color palette that combines red, white, blue, and black, to demonstrate passion, innovation, and reliability.

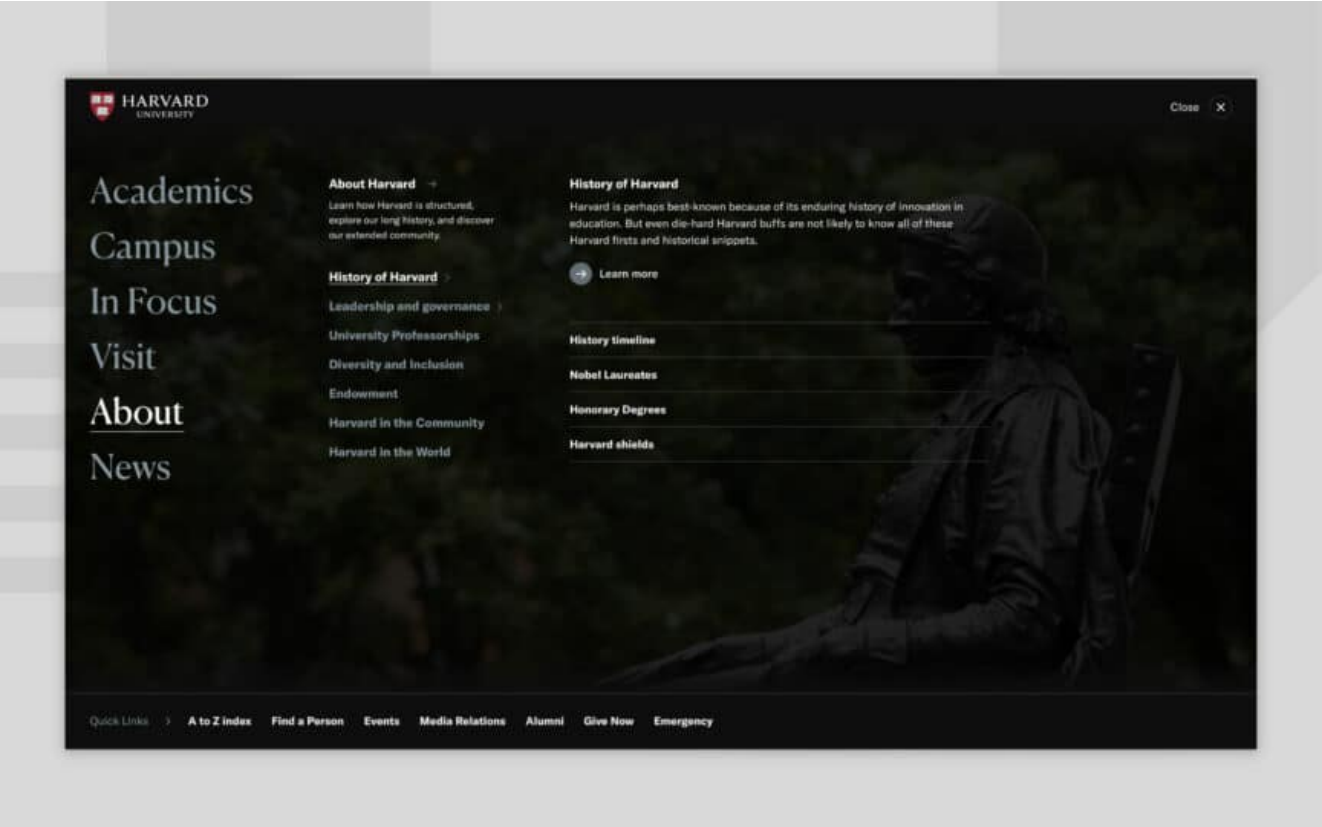
Key tip: Make your vision clear to your community. ASD stands out because the school's website, and its marketing materials are always demonstrating a forward-thinking approach to education.



3. Harvard University

Easily one of the most recognizable examples of great school branding comes from Harvard. What I love about this school's approach to branding is how it connects both the past and the future. Harvard's prestigious history doesn't just shine through in its traditional logo.

It's also frequently featured in the content Harvard shares, both online and offline. You can see a complete timeline of Harvard's history and accomplishments on the university website.



Plus, Harvard regularly sends experts to events and conferences, to share insights gathered through years of teaching and research.

However, there's more to Harvard than its history. The group also constantly draws attention to how it's innovating in the educational landscape, sharing blogs and news stories on its site, as well as authentic insights into student achievements.

Key tip: Combine your history with your vision of the future. Show your expertise and legacy status but remember to consistently boost your brand equity, with ongoing innovation.



4. East Kent College

Here's another amazing school branding example taken from Fabrik's portfolio. East Kent College, previously "Thanet College" has completely overhauled its brand image in recent years. Tired of being just another local college, the group wanted to be seen as the future of education.

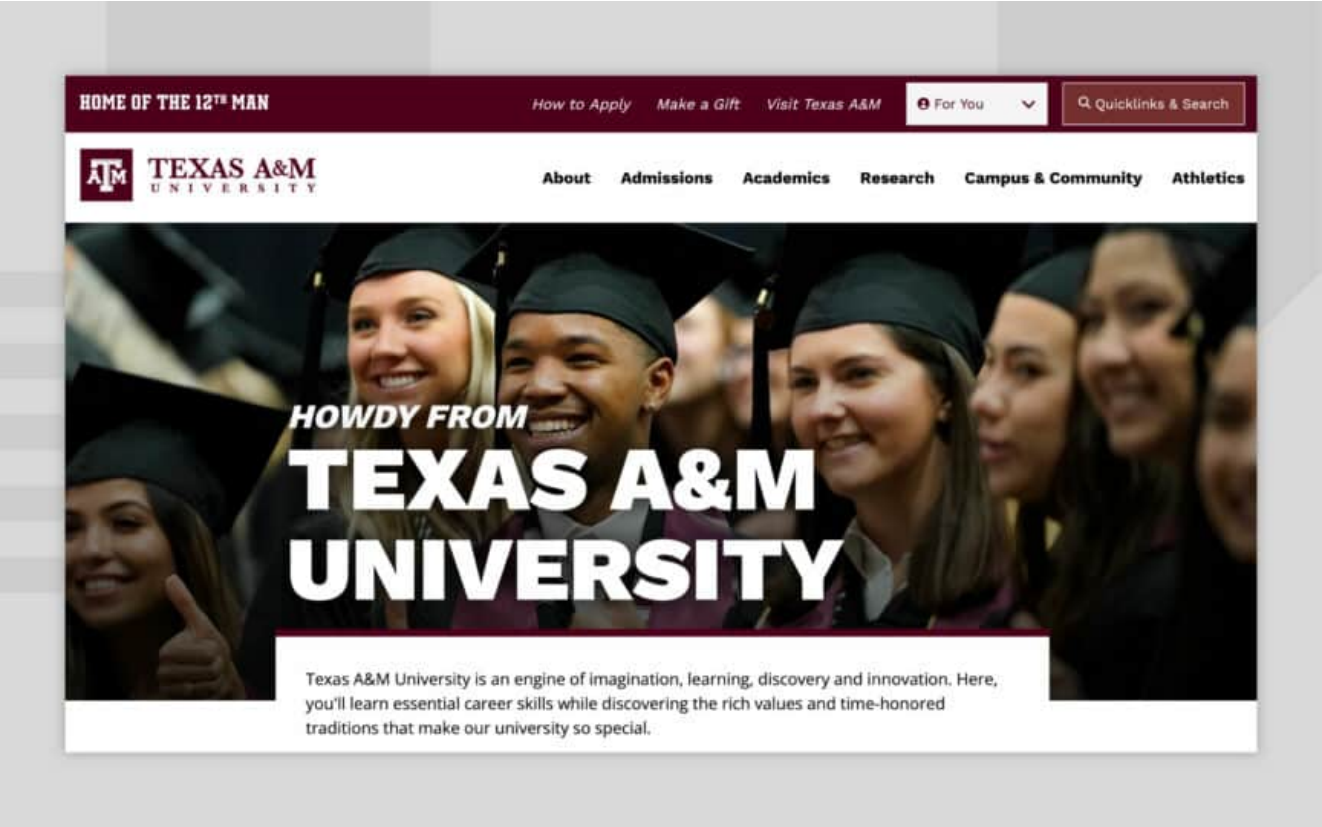
To do this, they needed to unify the branding assets of their various campuses and training centers and redefine themselves as a symbol of progressive academic achievement.

Today, the EKC brand is a beacon of modernity, with a sleek and modern logo, based around geometric shapes, and an impactful, but versatile color palette, filled with bright shades.



The best thing about the EKC group brand is that it's so consistent. Whether you visit the group website, or one of the child colleges or training institutions created by the group, you'll get the same visual experience, and the same insight into an inclusive, welcoming personality.

Key tip: As your educational institution grows and expands, make sure you take a consistent approach to branding. Find your core message, your personality, and your visual identity, and use these core assets as a compass for growth.

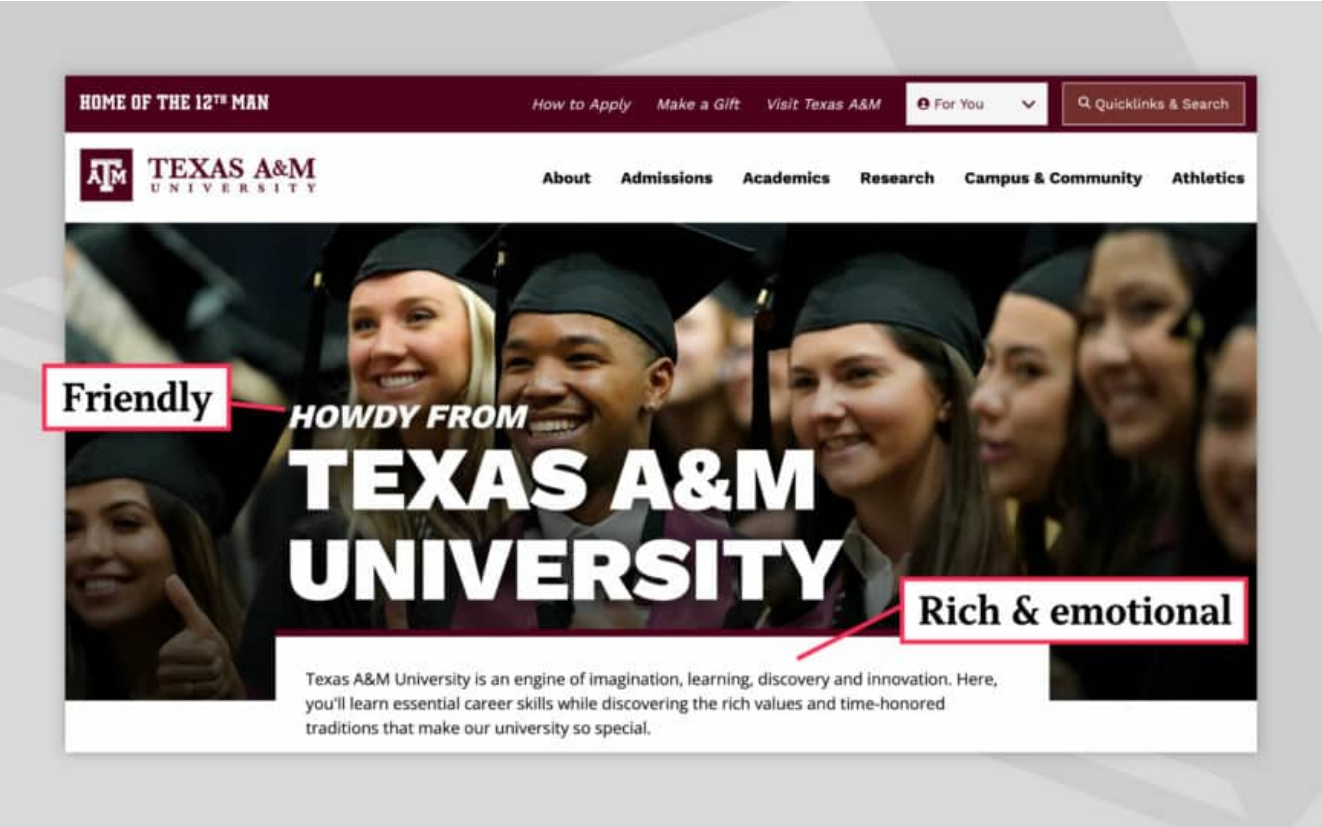


5. Texas A&M University

I've drawn attention to a lot of the visual elements that stand out among leading school brands, but it's worth remembering there's more to a great brand than your image. Texas A&M University offers a great insight into how powerful the right tone of voice is for school branding.

Notably, the logo and color palette used by the group is still great. It conveys a sense of history and heritage, as well as professionalism with deep maroon shades and serif fonts. However, it's the messaging of Texas A&M that really sticks with its community.

Look at how the group demonstrates a friendly personality ("Howdy"), and inspires its community with rich, emotional content on its website:



The welcoming personality of this college also shines through on its social media channels, where it champions its students and alumni, highlights the joy of life on the campus, and even experiments with emojis and hashtags.

Key tip: Find a powerful tone of voice for your brand that conveys your personality. Use emotional and engaging language on your school's website and in marketing materials. Most importantly, speak the language of your target audience.



6. Central Bedfordshire College

There’s a lot to love about the eye-catching and engaging branding strategy of Central Bedfordshire College. Let’s start by looking at the group’s logo and visual identity. Unlike most colleges, CBC has a beautiful, brightly colored logo, that helps to convey its focus on diversity and inclusivity.

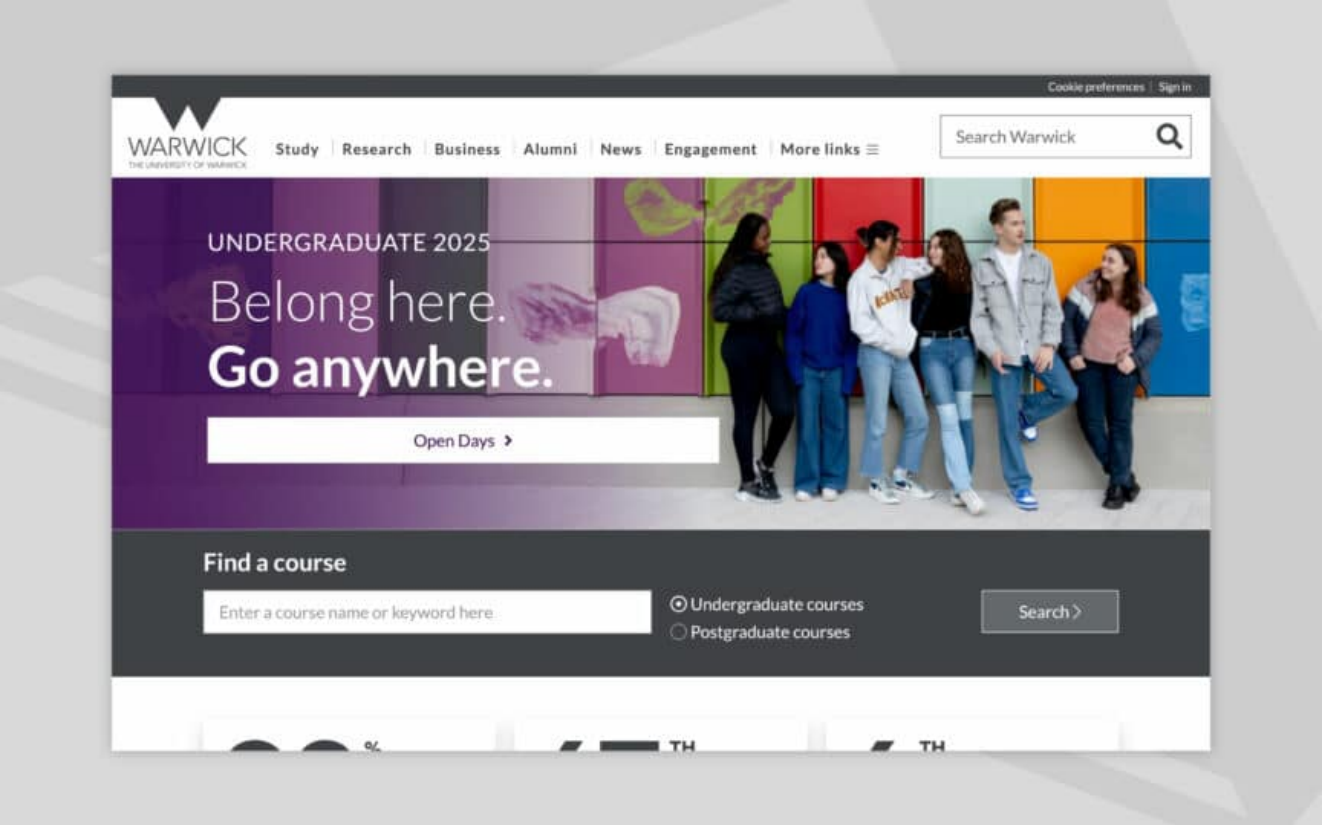
The mixture of colors used in the school’s logo instantly tell potential students that this is a place where they’ll feel accepted and have fun while they learn. Plus, the triangle shapes convey a sense of direction and purpose.

Another thing that stands out about CBC’s branding is their approach to making their students the “face” of their brand. The college website, printed prospectus catalog, and even social media pages all draw attention to not just their existing students, but what future students will get from a course.

This professional approach to using authentic photography

throughout their branding style guide and marketing assets instantly makes CBC more appealing to its audience. It helps people visualize what life will be like as a CBC student.

Key tip: A successful school brand should make your students the champion of your story. Find ways to draw attention to your existing student's success, and help future students visualize the benefits they'll get from enrolling with you.



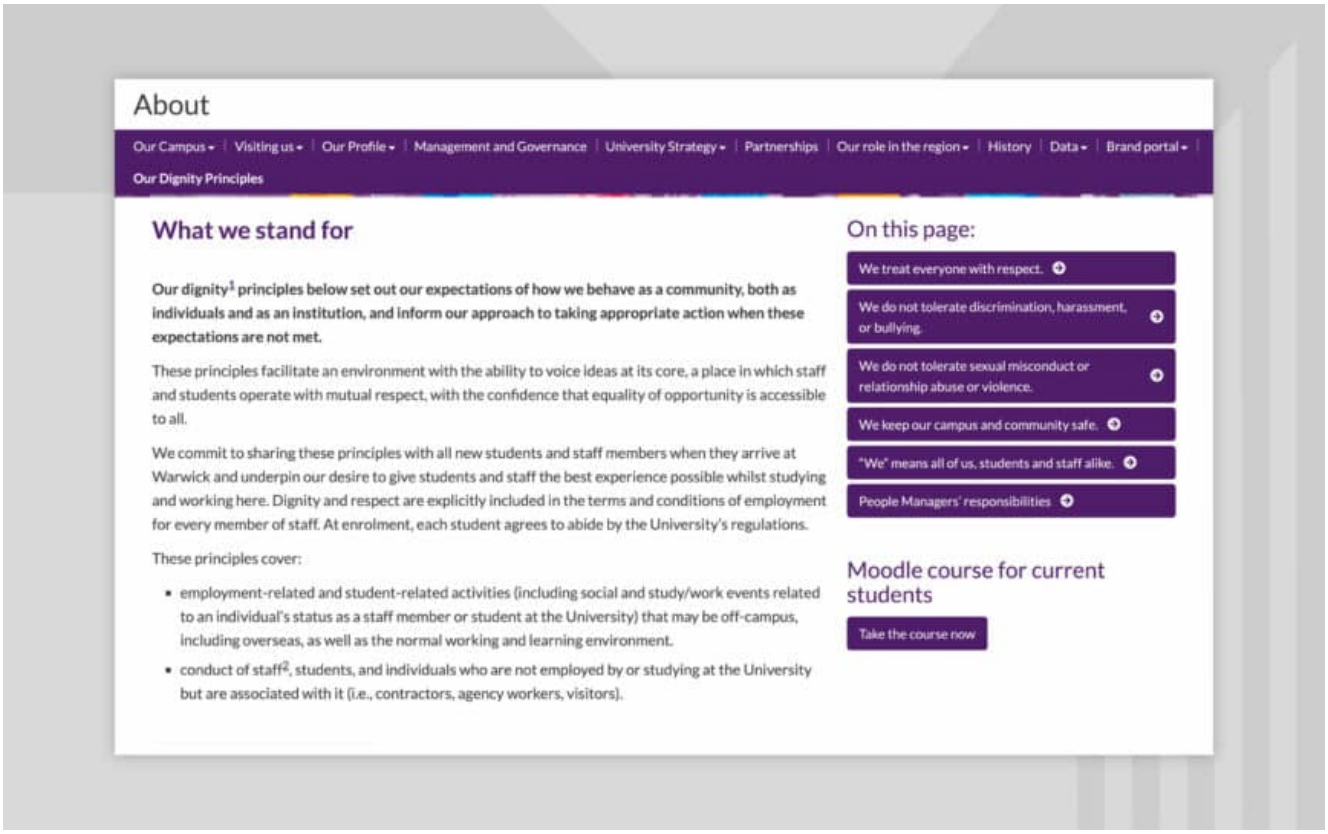
7. Warwick University

The Warwick University brand is another example of an identity that leverages powerful messaging, bright colors, and school community spirit. Like many of the brands I've mentioned so far, Warwick has a fantastic, modern logo, which uses triangle shapes to highlight the idea of progression.

The graphic design elements on the school's website are excellent too, combining authentic photography with eye-catching patterns. However, what really makes this university stand out is its commitment to sharing its story and mission

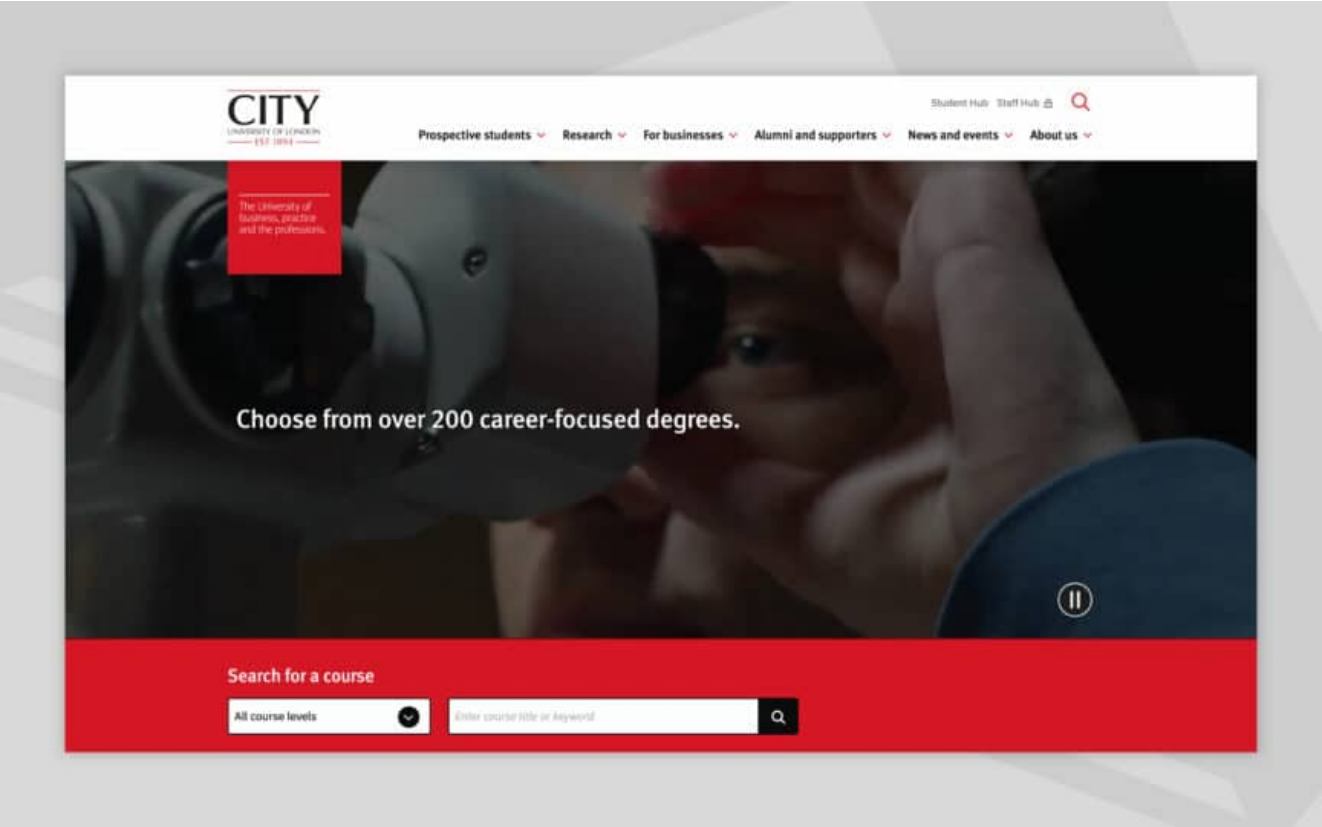
with its audience.

The Warwick University website provides an in-depth insight into the group's "principles", and what the institution stands for. This is a great way for the school to form deeper connections with students and community members through shared values.



The group's marketing efforts also draw attention to Warwick's values. For instance, the group regularly shares social media posts about its accomplishments, as well as the projects and initiatives its investing in:

Key tip: Make your school's values clear. Ensure every time your audience interacts with your institution, they get an insight into what you stand for. Everything from your school website to your social media posts should highlight your brand promise.



8. City University

City University's approach to branding is one of the most interesting I've seen in a while. What makes the educational institution so unique is its focus on constantly evolving and innovating.

When the university wanted to capture the attention of school graduates, it invited Fabrik to create an amazing direct mail marketing campaign that went beyond the traditional "Welcome pack" offered by most universities.

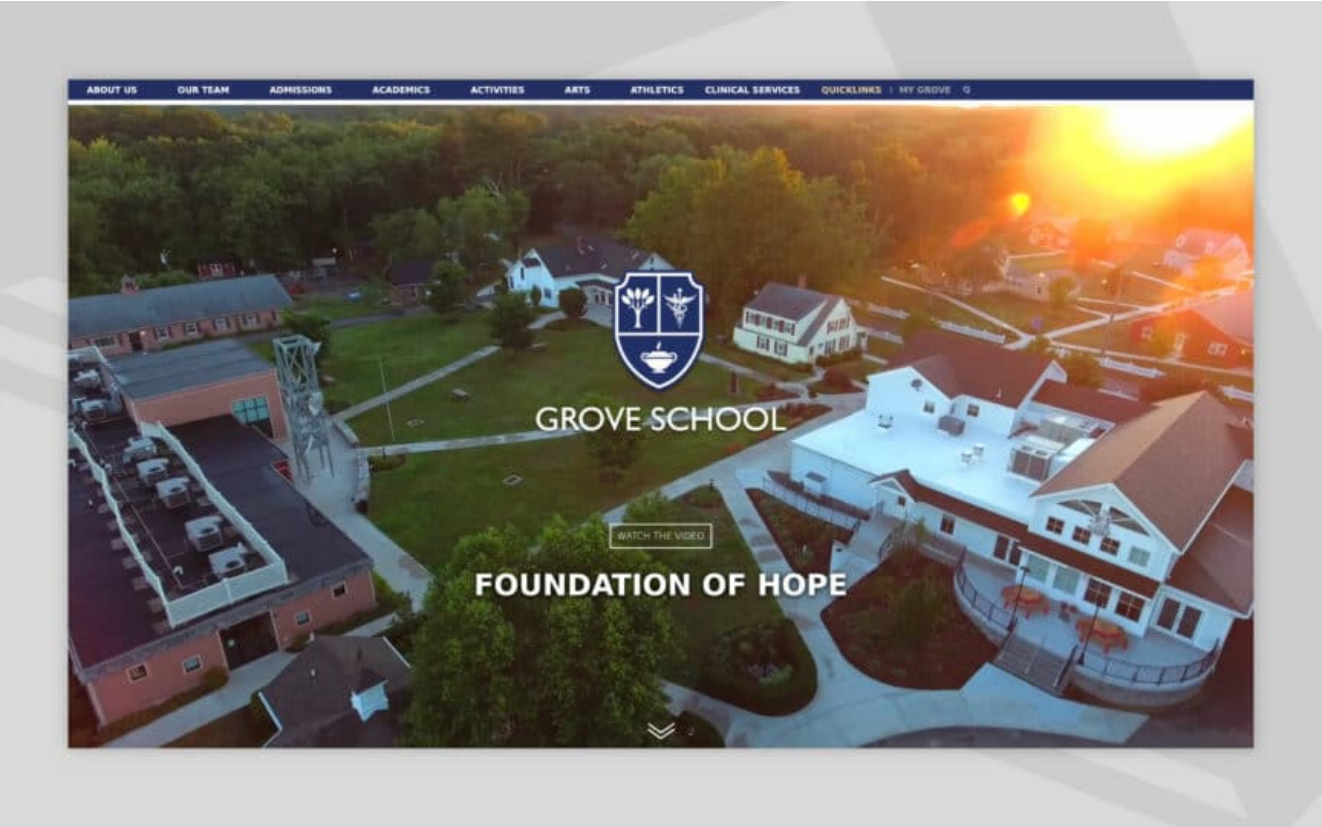
The marketing campaign included the creation of the City "Book of Secrets", which included tips and ideas students had discovered when learning at the institution.



The luxurious nature of the book highlighted the prestigious nature of the school, while also drawing attention to what makes it so unique and interesting. It also helped to boost engagement among existing students, while attracting new prospective learners.

In fact, the book was so popular, many existing alumni requested a copy. That's not the only example of innovative branding and marketing strategies used by City University either. In 2024, they launched their own "post graduate virtual fair".

Key tip: Constantly experiment with new ways to elevate your brand in the eyes of your target audience. Highlight your school identity through innovative and experiential marketing campaigns, and get your students involved in telling your story.



9. Grove School

Most of the school branding examples I've covered so far look at providers of further education. Universities generally do invest more into branding initiatives than smaller public and private schools. However, any school can benefit from the right brand.

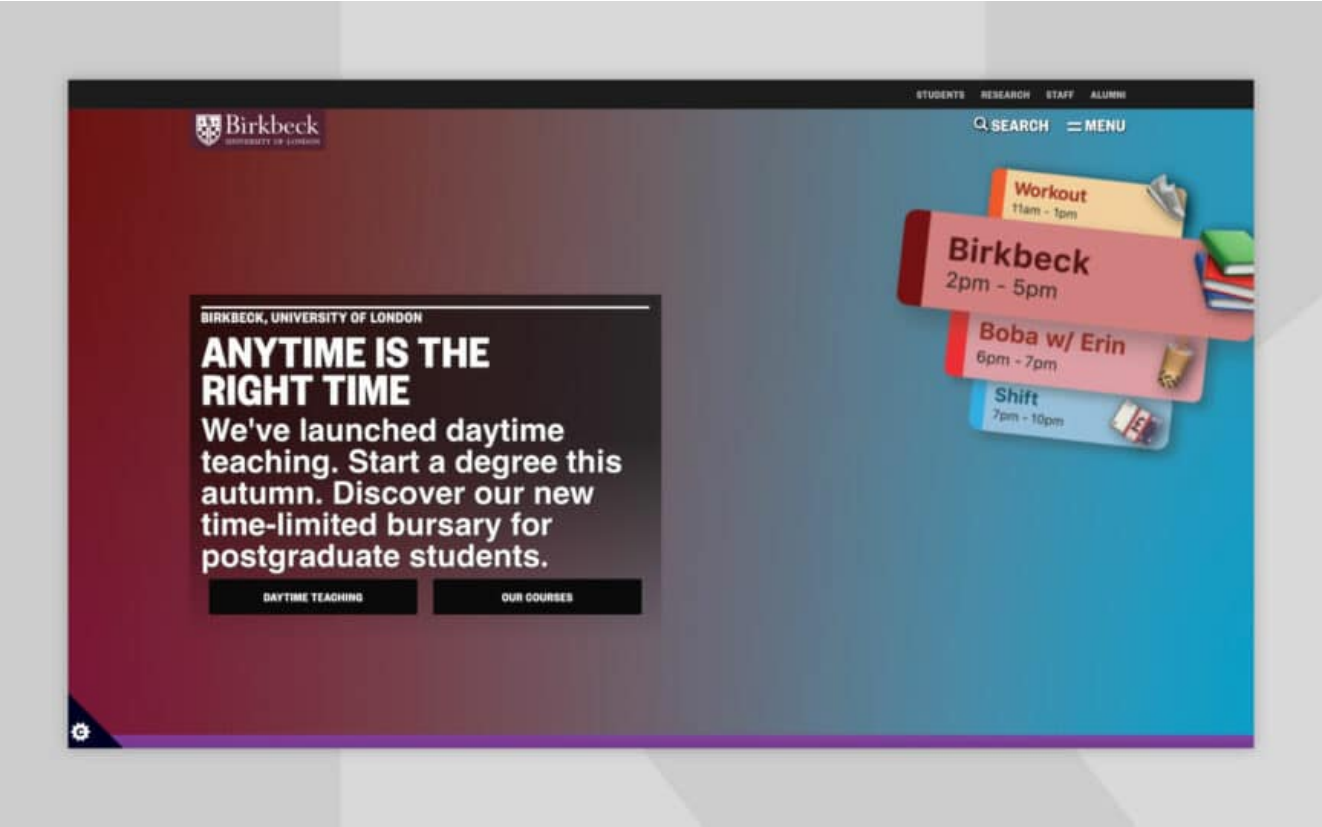
Grove School, a private school in Connecticut, is an excellent example of school branding. Its traditional logo and school colors make it stand out among other charter schools and private institutions, demonstrating history and heritage.

The best thing about Grove School's brand, however, is how it highlights its unique value propositions. This isn't just a school that helps students achieve their goals academically. It helps youngsters improve their life skills, build resilience, and overcome challenges too.



It offers dedicated speech and language lessons, as well as individual psychotherapy, group therapy, and family therapy to struggling students. By focusing on what it does differently to other educational institutions, Grove School stands out as more than just a school. It’s a partner for development.

Key tip: Find your unique value proposition. Identify what your school can offer students that no other organization provides and draw attention to what makes you special.



10. Birkbeck University

Operating as part of the University of London, Birkbeck has a powerful and distinctive brand identity, that clearly resonates with its target audience.

First, look at Birkbeck's logo, it might just look like another traditional school emblem, but the focus on the owl mascot conveys ideas of wisdom and discovery – ideal for an educational institution.

Like many of the school branding examples I've covered here, Birkbeck also highlights its students frequently in its branding and marketing materials. The Birkbeck prospectuses feature photos, quotes, and tips from alumni.

The website offers insights into student life, with videos of real students giving campus tours.

Plus, Birkbeck has built a massive online and offline branded community. It has its own student union, event calendar, and social media channels. There's even a branded hashtag

“#BBKlife”.

What makes Birkbeck’s branding truly impressive is that doesn’t just try to show and tell students why it’s the best school around. It asks actual students to share their genuine thoughts and feelings, using advocacy to elevate its reputation.

Key tip: Get your students involved in elevating your brand. Show your audience behind the scenes of your brand story, and the experiences you can offer.

How to get started with school branding ideas

Hopefully the school branding examples above have given you some insights into what amazing branding looks like for an educational institution. Based on all my reviews above, I want to share a few final tips with school administrators and leaders building their own brand:

Create a distinct mission and vision

Make it easy for students to understand your values, your mission in the educational landscape, and your vision of the future. Align your vision with the aspirations of your intended audience.

Be student-focused

Make your students the hero of your brand story. Constantly draw attention to their insights and experiences in your marketing materials. Look for ways to add your students and alumni to your marketing campaigns.

Build an impactful visual identity

Your school’s image is important for capturing the attention of student and faculty. Choose an evocative, powerful logo,

and an eye-catching color palette, and make the most of professional photography.

Emphasize your strengths

Draw attention to what makes your school unique, whether it's an amazing community experience, unique courses, or a focus on holistic health. Use your unique value proposition to elevate your brand.

Maintain consistency

Consistency is crucial to building a long-lasting relationship with your audience. Design brand guidelines for your visual identity, and editorial guidelines that keep your tone of voice consistent across all channels and touchpoints.

Mastering branding for schools

As you can see from the fantastic school branding examples outlined above, a great brand can be a powerful thing for an educational institution. It's not just a way to differentiate yourself from the competition. It's how you connect emotionally with your target audience.

The right brand will capture the attention of potential faculty members and students, inspire loyalty, and pride among students, and give you the resources you need for consistent growth.

If you need help building the perfect school brand, or re-energizing your current brand identity, work with the experts. Contact Fabrik today to find out how we can help you design and implement the perfect branding strategy.

Alternatively, check out our customer success stories, for insights into the school brands we've helped to elevate over the years.

Fabrik: A branding agency for our times.