SUNY Potsdam Brand/Color Report
April 2014

On October 7, 2013, stakeholders from across campus convened to address an increasing discrepancy between College constituents in the use of color. In attendance was: Chip Morris (Student Affairs/Athletics), Jim Zalacca, Bill Mitchell, Jamey Hoose, Mike Lewis (Athletics), Tom Nesbitt, (Admissions), Lyndon Lake (College Store/PACES), Ruth Policella (Campus Life), and Deb Dudley, Donna Planty, J.P. Manke, and Alexandra Jacobs (Public Affairs)

Overview
During this initial meeting, the group discussed SUNY Potsdam’s color challenges in regards to having a consistent and stable official color palette that serves all aspects of the campus. Focusing primarily on the last thirty years of branding that has been implemented we reviewed some of the past decisions that have informed our current difficulties and challenges.

1. What is the name of SUNY Potsdam’s colors?
   a. Maroon and Gray
   b. Red and Gray
   c. Crimson and Gray
   d. Garnet and Gray
   e. Burgundy and Gray

All of the above terms have been used over the last thirty years by College officials to describe Potsdam colors. Both a and b have become the most entrenched vocabulary related to one side of our palette depending on what source you use.

Gray, however, is universally accepted as part of the palette.

This discussion outlined our first challenge, which was to solidify the terminology related to the Potsdam colors.

2. Over the past thirty years SUNY Potsdam has identified and used three different Pantone colors as it’s official color. 

   (NOTE COLOR REPRESENTATION MAY NOT BE EXACT BUT USED FOR ILLUSTRATION OF COMPLEXITY AND FOR READERS TO VISUALIZE DIFFERENCES IN HISTORICAL PALETTES.)

   Pantone 193
   1985 to 2000

   Pantone 1807
   2001-present
   main campus

   Pantone 506
   2001-present
   athletics
In 2000, the campus solicited two separate firms to develop brand identities. One firm in conjunction with the Office of Public Affairs and campus committee developed a revised logo and color palette that endorsed Pantone 1807 Red and 429 Gray as the official colors for the campus. At the same time a graphic designer was engaged to develop a logo family for the Athletics identity and a separate color palette was chosen and implemented for Athletics. That palette was Pantone 506 Maroon and 429 Gray.

Our current situation is the result of a splintered understanding of what the College’s official Pantone color is as well as the belief by some College professionals that it was allowed to have two colors serving one institution. The understanding of where our current difficulty comes from helped us outline our second challenge, to identify and implement as unified color representation of the official SUNY Potsdam palette.

Here and Now
The result of separate color identities that were endorsed over twelve years ago has been the inconsistent use of both 1807 and 506 as well as a diverse interpretation of what the SUNY Potsdam color is both visually and by name. The consequences are a scattered brand presence and weakening of the College’s identity as well as a tangible cost in institution time and money related to everything from expensive renovation projects to team uniforms.

SUNY Potsdam cannot afford to have a scattered brand. Our second challenge was to identify a physical color that will be adopted by the entire institution universally. Focus groups were organized over the Fall and Spring semesters to provide data related to solutions moving forward.

Focus Groups
A small committee was formed to pursue resolution to challenges one and two. The committee led by Deb Dudley included J.P. Manke, graphic designer, Tom Nesbitt, Director of Admissions, Jim Zalacca, Athletic Director, Bill Mitchell, Assistant Athletic Director, Lyndon Lake, Director of College Store, and Ruth Policella, Director of Campus Life.

At the end of the Fall semester 2013 and beginning of the Spring semester 2014 several focus groups were held. The results are below.
## Color Confirmation Focus Groups 2013

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Potsdam Color Confirmation: What is your Potsdam Color?

When I think of Potsdam colors I think of ________________ and Gray.

When I see Potsdam's color it resembles this color most. Check one of the boxes above your Potsdam color.

Results were clear. Potsdam’s colors are Maroon and Gray. A deliberate choice was made to follow American style guides in the spelling “Gray” with an “a.” Also, it was noted that the gray palette could be flexible as it is a neutral that does not suffer the same range of interpretation compared to the maroon palette.

The committee convened to review focus group results and address the second challenge to narrow the selection of Pantone colors used as a reference for the representation of the College identity. We reviewed the splintered understanding of what
the College’s official Pantone color. A selection of merchandise from the College store was evaluated to give examples of the range of color and representation that has and can be produced.

The committee agreed that the following considerations must be made when finalizing the physical color palette:

a. The color must have some ties to historical identity of the Potsdam experience.
b. The color must be somewhat standard in vendor representation. A completely unique custom color would be difficult and costly to maintain.
c. The color must be aesthetically pleasing in order to promote the College with a sharp color identity.
d. The color must be graphically flexible and contrast with black sufficiently to satisfy flexible use and best presentation of colors in all medium. Reproduction and visual dynamics become problematic if the color is too close to black.

The committee also discussed some of the challenges and goals of applying a narrower color palette especially related to merchandise, including uniforms.

Constraints to color consistency include but are not limited to the following:

a. It is impossible to represent identical color across different medium (paper, fabrics, metal, plastics, illuminated surfaces)
b. College is often restricted to purchasing regulation that require competitive bid processes and cannot use one vendor exclusively for all purchases to ensure consistency.
c. Vendors change their color palette and representations each year
d. Colors different from batch to batch within a single vendor

Even with limitation listed above we agreed that SUNY Potsdam could do more to narrow the color palette and reduce the amount of variance in the representation of the Potsdam colors. As Pantone is the industry standard in referencing specific brand colors for an organization the committee narrowed the selection of colors to two similar Pantone swatches as reference for a unified campus color profile.
Pantone 1955 represents the selection that best reflect the results of the surveys in physical representation of color. All colors have pros and cons associated with their use in print, on screen and in merchandise and how they may contrast with gray and black, however the committee concluded that Pantone 1955 would be a good choice to serve the campus and appropriately reflect the results of the focus groups.

Vendor catalogs have been reviewed to determine the most consistent color options with the newly selected swatch. Each vendor name varies drastically from Crimson to Garnet to Maroon. It may be the case that Nike Maroon is actually brown where as the Nike crimson is a better match to what SUNY Potsdam identifies as maroon.

This discussion led the committee to defining its third and most difficult challenge of defining and applying the necessary discipline to implementing a comprehensive rollout of what is decided as Potsdam’s official color. This effort will institutionalize brand checks and balances in all areas of campus that enforce the correct representation of SUNY Potsdam’s graphic identity in verbal, written and visual representations of the brand.

In order to accomplish this we will focus on the high-volume production venues of the campus in the rollout to have a high-impact, yet cost-effective plan that aggressively tackles bringing consistency to the SUNY Potsdam color identity so that it is working in strengthening the brand instead of weakening it.

Those areas include the following:
   a. Public Affairs (includes Advancement/Alumni Relations)
   b. Athletics
   c. College Store/Bookstore
   d. Admissions
   e. Student Life

Communications
   • Update Website communications toolbox information, style guides and resources
   • Update licensing and trademark art sheet and documentation for licensed vendors
   • Campus announcement of outcomes of study: faculty, staff and students of color confirmation
   • Update Alumni through Potsdam People magazine, website and Alma Matters e-newsletter

Implementation

Implementation would include but not be limited to the following:
   • Replace graphic references across campus with correct color representation focusing on Maxcy Hall and supplying graphic interventions as focal points in Hockey arena, field house, gymnasium and fitness center
   • Orientation for athletics, admissions, alumni relations and student affairs personnel about color, merchandise and ordering. Review current vendor palettes and confirm color selections for top twenty manufacturers (examples:
Nike Crimson is equivalent to Potsdam Maroon, Bauer Burgundy is equivalent to Potsdam Maroon
• Instate an annual review with color committee members to address inconsistencies, merchandising and other discrepancies across campus.

Next Steps
4/1/14: Review of Draft Report by Alumni Marketing Committee
  Suggested edits incorporated COMPLETE
4/14/14: Review and endorsement of report by President’s Council
4/21/14: Campus Communications rollout
4/28/14: Begin implementation of color corrections across campus
4/28/14: Organize standing committee and annual review