OVERVIEW

In the fall of 2012 a logo committee representing various university interests convened to evaluate the effectiveness of University of Northern Colorado logos. The committee identified the following objectives at the beginning of the process:

1. Determine if current logos portray a positive university image.
2. Determine if the logos create a cohesive (or confused) visual identity system.
3. Determine if the logos meet the needs of the various university constituents (academic departments, athletics, recruitment, alumni, benefactors, students, retailers, licensees and community members).
4. Determine the artistic integrity of the logo system as viewed from a creative agency perspective.
5. Develop a recommendation for logo artwork changes (if any).

RESEARCH

The logo committee provided oversight for the following research:

1. **Agency Review** – provided an outside, non-biased perspective on the artistic integrity of the university logos. The agency also provided information on alternative logo approaches used by other universities.
2. **Online Survey** – gathered perceptions from more than 1,200 primary university constituents including students, student athletes, employees, alumni, donors, arts/athletics season ticket holders and local community members.
3. **Focus Groups** – provided more refined information in an informal setting. Students, faculty, staff and university graphic designers participated in these groups.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **University Identity**
   Overall, the university logos received fairly positive reviews with a few exceptions noted in this report. However, none of the university logos have overwhelming support as must-keep logos. This may be because the university has created its logo set over a period of time. In spite of a significant effort to maintain consistency, the logo system as a whole is not cohesive and there are too many logos (in particular, too many acronyms and mascot logos), which creates symbolic vagueness. Additionally, the university logos have not had time to develop a sense of tradition because of multiple name changes over the university’s history.

2. **Mascot Logos**
   In general, the academic and athletic bear logos are seen as positive representations of the university. However, there are also strong negative perceptions about each. For example, the academic bear logo is often referred to as a “shrimp,” and it is hard to recognize as a bear by those who look at it for the first time. The athletic bear logo has some equity, however it is
perceived as having a cartoon or amateur appearance. While the number of people who want a single university logo compared to the number who want separate logos for athletics and academics is about equal, research indicates that having multiple mascot logos causes confusion about the university identity.

3. **Acronyms and Words**

   **UNC:** The term “UNC” has been used as an acronym for the university since its most recent name change in 1970. The acronym is used widely in publications, messaging and conversation. However, the acronym poses a problem: It is the same acronym used by the University of North Carolina. To make the matter more complicated, the font used by both universities is almost identical. Locally and within the state the term “UNC” is mostly associated with the University of Northern Colorado. However, once outside of the area the term is mostly associated with North Carolina. The term “UNCO” was noted as a solution but it is not naturally used in publications, messaging or daily conversations. When survey takers are asked what they want to see on athletics uniforms, “UNC” is most preferred.

   **NC:** The term “NC” was created to differentiate the university’s athletic teams at the national level from the University of North Carolina. Survey findings indicate that the term “NC” is rarely used beyond the logo that is placed on athletic uniforms and/or licensed merchandise. Interestingly, the University of North Carolina also uses an interlocking “NC” on its football helmet. Survey results positioned the “NC” logo as the second least preferred logo. Research supports keeping the letter “U” in the logo.

   **Northern Colorado:** Findings indicate that people understand the words “Northern Colorado” to connect more with the region instead of the university. This does not mean that the words are used occasionally to identify the university in conversation, particularly at the national level. However it is not a logo wanted by most university constituents. When the primary athletics logo is used (which includes the term “Northern Colorado” and the mascot) the artwork becomes overly complicated and difficult to reproduce.

   **University of Northern Colorado:** This logo was the highest rated university logo, primarily because it spells out the university name and provides the university with academic prestige. The artwork itself suffers from not providing a strong identifying presence when used in promotional settings. It is also too long when there is a need for a condensed identifier.

   **Bears:** Since the word “Bears” is not an official university logo, it was not included in the survey as a logo form. However, there is a strong affinity to the “Bears” as a mascot. The term “UNC Bears” was the top write-in solution by survey responders when asked what they would like to see on athletics uniforms.

4. **Colors**

   University colors have been compromised over the years largely due to the increase in fabric color choices. One of the most notable changes occurred in athletics when the department began using a variation of the gold color to accommodate uniform purchasing needs. Through research, many indicated that the Vegas Gold color used by athletics looks tan, beige or khaki. Research overwhelmingly supports the use of a bright gold as the university’s official gold color in all applications. Other color issues include:
- University departments and outside retailers purchase apparel with different tints of navy blue and gold, particularly when purchasing t-shirts
- The alma mater references “purple and gold”
- Use of tertiary colors has added a level of complexity to the color system

5. **Seal**
   The university seal received the lowest score on the logo survey. Constituents overwhelmingly dislike the seal. Most people dislike the design and shape while others do not feel it accurately represents what the university stands for.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Embrace the term “UNC” and design a new “UNC” logotype (text-only treatment)** that differentiates the acronym from North Carolina’s logotype. Use the logotype for athletics and academics.

2. **Design a new “University of Northern Colorado” logotype** that works in tandem with the “UNC” logotype. Create different orientations including stacked and justified versions. Also create an application for individual academic/service departments throughout the university.

3. **Design a new “Bears” logotype** that incorporates the new “UNC” logotype for athletics, alumni and spirit-oriented purposes.

4. **Design a new mascot logo** to be used for athletics and when a university spirit mark is needed, such as in alumni and/or admissions. In general, the mascot logo will not be used for academic purposes. Provide options for use with the new “UNC” logotype and the new “University of Northern Colorado” logotype. Design options should include updating the current athletic bear, creating a ¾ view of the bear head and exploring a new bear representation (whether bear head or entire body). Eliminate all other mascot logos.

5. **Eliminate the “NC” and “Northern Colorado” logotypes.**

6. **Develop a new graphic solution to be used on athletics uniforms.** This may include one of the above graphics or a complimentary graphic.

7. **Design a new university seal** to be used for formal applications including diplomas, transcripts, commencement materials, and president and board of trustee uses.

8. **Standardize “UNC Blue” and “UNC Gold” colors** for all applications including electronic communication, print communication and apparel (including athletic uniforms.)

9. **Replace “purple” and gold” in the university alma mater with “blue and gold.”**

10. **Clarify the use of secondary and tertiary colors** as part of the university’s identity standards.
GRAPHIC OBJECTIVES
The new logos should:

1. Have timeless/enduring appeal.

2. Be relevant and universally appealing for all audiences.

3. Be simple to implement for all applications including: apparel (screen printing and stitching), uniforms, print, web/digital, signage, outdoor advertising, video and TV broadcast.

4. Be scalable for use in small and large contexts.

5. Include color and black and white (without gray shades.)

6. Portray strength, confidence and spirit (for the mascot logo) instead of ferocity.

7. Be unique and easily recognizable.