



PRINCETON
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Building beyond a legacy.

Princeton University

Case Study

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When Princeton University made the decision to remove Woodrow Wilson's name from its School of Public and International Affairs (known as SPIA), its leaders faced a critical branding challenge: How could the school forge a unique identity beyond a name?

In the wake of George Floyd's death and the subsequent protests of 2020, Princeton University chose to separate itself from Wilson's legacy of racist policies. The school had long been seen as one of the world's premier public policy schools, developing and leading creative approaches to society's challenges, with particular emphasis on diverse scholarly perspectives and evidence-based analysis. Ologie partnered with SPIA to help unite its diverse stakeholders around a renewed sense of purpose, articulate the school's distinct story, and elevate its mission in a bold and meaningful way.

Through in-depth research and interviews, we learned that we needed to underscore SPIA's connection to Princeton University, while ensuring that its name and mission could stand confidently on their own.

To that end, we developed a strategic framework, built on key insights to help articulate SPIA's role in producing data-driven policy solutions and its ability to equip students with the skills and knowledge to shape a better world.

A foundation for the future.

The school’s brand positioning needed to reflect its enduring commitment to public service, academic excellence, and interdisciplinary inquiry — bringing together the brightest minds for the greatest good.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Princeton SPIA convenes¹ the brightest minds in policy² for the greatest good in the world.³

- 1

Bringing people of various perspectives, experiences and backgrounds together...
- 2

Who are profound practitioners and researchers in local, state, national and international policy ...
- 3

As a unified collective working toward a more inclusive and equitable world.

A messaging framework further defined what makes SPIA distinct and gave communicators a strong and consistent story to tell.

MESSAGING ROAD MAP



Princeton offers rigorous study across intentionally intimate classes, so students become prepared collaborators with a multiplicity of perspectives.



Princeton’s distinguished faculty with diverse experiences allow students to become well-rounded in broad-based, time-tested knowledge.



Princeton offers opportunities to connect with an alumni powerhouse, so students become poised to continue and create new, profound legacies in policy and beyond.



Princeton’s world-class reputation and international focus allow students to become confident in serving where personal passions and the world’s needs intersect.

A brand that stands on impact.



SPIA is defined not just by its history, but also by its ongoing influence: grounded in the present, yet always looking ahead.

The distinctive tapered columns of the school's home in Robertson Hall became the perfect symbol of this legacy, representing SPIA's role as a bridge between today's experts and tomorrow's leaders.

These ideas and inspiration came together to form the creative platform, "Pillars of Tomorrow."



PILLARS OF TOMORROW

A storied and united legacy.

The platform speaks to the school's timeless commitment to rigorous scholarship, ethical leadership, and bold, principled action — and connects SPIA's 20 centers and programs under a single cohesive narrative.

At the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, we stand, side by side, as a community dedicated to social discourse and collective action.

THE BRIGHTEST MINDS FOR THE GREATEST GOOD.

Strengthening our positions and points of view, finding the gaps that lead to greater solutions.

We reimagine the opportunity in poverty and inequality.
We fight for security and diplomacy in the face of global conflict.
We find the energy to protect and sustain our environment.

Never still, never siloed. Not propping up an ivory tower, but upholding this institution and what it represents: Progress

WITH STAKES THIS HIGH, WE ALL MUST RISE TO MEET THE CHALLENGE.

Together, on the foundation we've laid, for the generations who follow, we stand to make our difference.

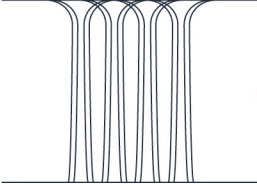
Not just as today's preeminent scholars or policy-shapers or public servants. But as

PILLARS OF TOMORROW.

Amplifying existing strengths.

Despite the loss of the Woodrow Wilson moniker, SPIA still had a powerful name to go by: Princeton. By fully embracing its connection to the well-known institution, SPIA was able to draw on all the established prestige and credibility that come with it.

FORMER LOGO



Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

The iconic pillar logo, reflecting the school's distinctive architecture, was widely recognized and loved. Unfortunately, it also presented some practical challenges when applied across modern marketing channels. The redesigned mark maintains the distinctive pillar motif, while introducing subtle updates that make the icon more versatile and scalable for any use.

NEW LOGO



PRINCETON
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The refreshed logo also places greater emphasis on the Princeton name, and establishes a clear hierarchy that integrates seamlessly within the greater university's brand architecture. It's also flexible enough to expand for specific campus location lockups.


SECONDARY LOCKUPS



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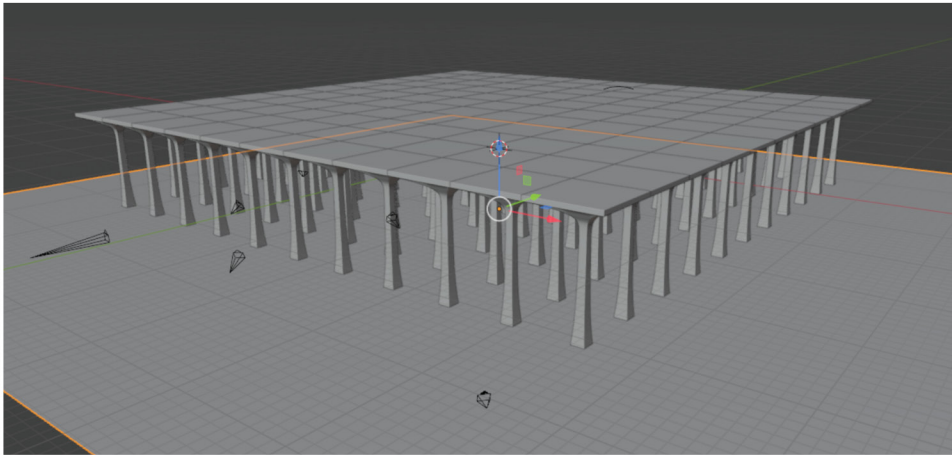


PRINCETON
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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
IN WASHINGTON D.C.

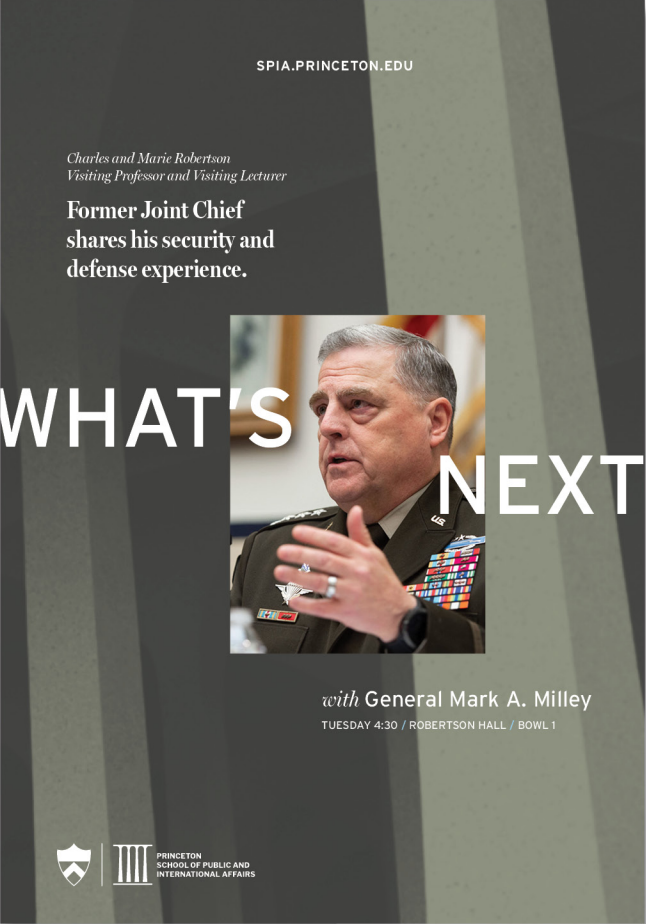
Building the story for tomorrow.

Communications for lectures and guest speakers make up a significant part of the SPIA communications team's efforts. They'd been struggling to find a way to keep all of these announcements and publications consistent without running out of icons or relying on stock photography.

As part of the new visual language, Ologie used the pillars to create two elements that can be used in a variety of combinations to keep communications feeling fresh, on brand, and distinctly like SPIA.



The first is a 3D model library created from a virtual recreation of the pillars themselves. It can be used to generate nearly infinite points of view. The graphics can then be combined with color, cropping, and motion to create new backgrounds and textures for any tactic.

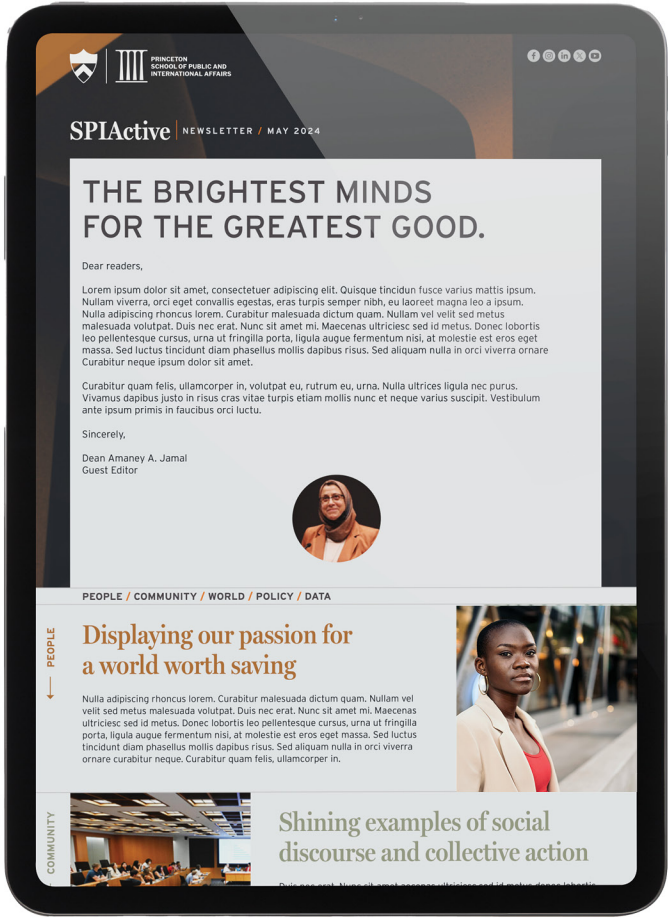




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Newsletter Template





Impact Report

Advancement put the new brand to immediate use, not just to inspire gifts, but also to deepen connections and pride with alumni and donors.



Case Study: Princeton University

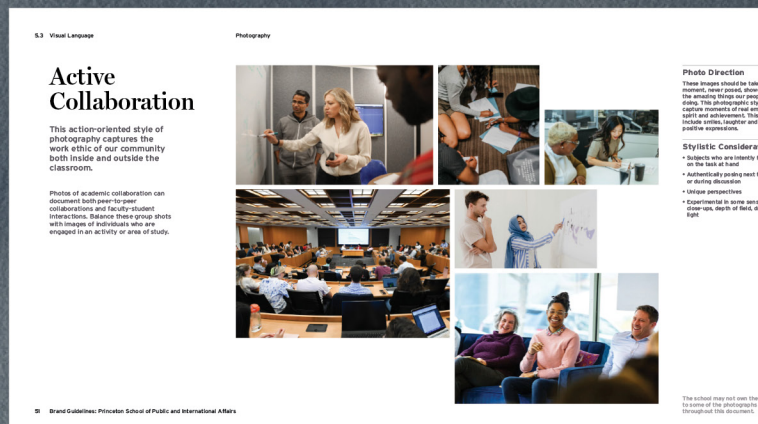
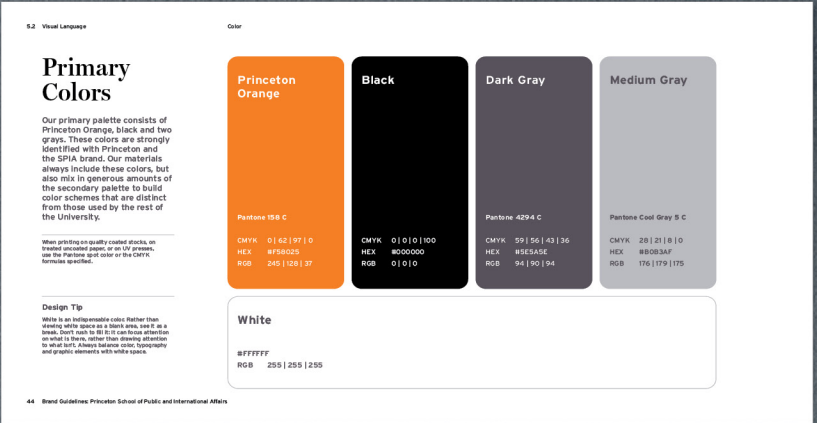
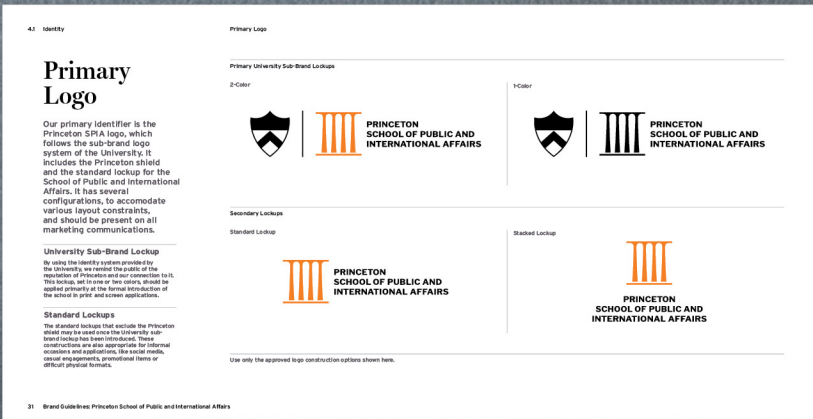


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Tools to stand the test of time.

To ensure consistency and longevity, we developed comprehensive brand guidelines that empowered SPIA's communications team to implement the brand and keep it alive. We also partnered with the school to produce an anthemic 90-second video that would unveil the new platform and logo to internal and external audiences.



Client
Perspective

“Like the University as a whole, Princeton SPIA maintains a deeply held commitment to serving the public good. The language around ‘Pillars of Tomorrow’ eloquently articulates that the School’s academic character—its scholarship, its research, its teaching—exists not for its own sake but in the service of a better, juster, safer world.”



**TOM
DURSO**
Director of Communications
Princeton School of Public and
International Affairs

There’s so much to a name. How has the new brand helped with the change from Woodrow Wilson to “SPIA”?

The research demonstrated so much pride among alumni in their affiliation with Princeton University. The new brand has enabled us to lean into that through a much more intentional self-identification as not merely “SPIA,” but “Princeton SPIA.” The brand’s emphasis on legacy is a good reminder that, after all, this institution began as the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs.

Getting community involvement — students, faculty, and alumni — in the rebranding process was vital. How do you think that input affected buy-in?

Broad-based input isn’t a luxury if you want buy-in—it’s a necessity. In our case, that input led to the development of a strategy and a brand platform that feels genuine and authentic to our most important stakeholders.

What was your reaction to seeing the iconic pillars of Robertson Hall in the brand creative? How has that helped unify stakeholders and reinforce the school’s mission?

Robertson Hall is a truly iconic embodiment of the School, so seeing it used so centrally in the creative is both gratifying and natural. The graphic’s rendering as a bolder mark than our previous one helps it serve as another point of pride and inspiration.

Our goal from the beginning was to create something singular for SPIA. How does the language surrounding “Pillars of Tomorrow” help communicate SPIA’s commitment to both academic rigor and real-world impact?

Like the University as a whole, Princeton SPIA maintains a deeply held commitment to serving the public good. The language around “Pillars of Tomorrow” eloquently articulates that the School’s academic character—its scholarship, its research, its teaching—exists not for its own sake but in the service of a better, juster, safer world.

How do you see the new brand evolving over time, and what role does it play in SPIA’s long-term vision for impact and leadership in public affairs?

The brand’s evolution over time will depend in large part on how successful we and our successors are at advancing the identity clearly and consistently. The visual piece of that is easier to tend to, I think. It’s the storytelling that can get fuzzy. We are in the process of developing an editorial strategy to serve as our narrative North Star, guiding us in the narratives we will develop to continue positioning the School as a global leader in service-oriented education and research.



Ologie is a branding and marketing agency focused on education. We help organizations build their reputations, recruit new students, and gain philanthropic support. By building distinctive brands and campaigns, we create breakthrough work that moves people to take action.

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